Eternal by burynr08

Category: IT
Genre: Angst, Horror
Language: English
Status: Completed
Published: 2019-09-13 14:35:25
Updated: 2019-10-01 20:54:21
Packaged: 2019-12-12 05:30:30
Rating: M
Chapters: 17
Words: 57,208
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: Ana is visiting her sister for the first time in Derry. She quickly meets Pennywise the Dancing Clown, and the reason for his obsession with her is a mystery. Ana learns a life-altering truth about herself. Pennywise/OC, Pennywise/OFC. Set during It Chapter 2.

1. Chapter 1

Disclaimer: My first uploaded fanfic, so read at your own risk ladies and gents. I only own the character of Ana and her family. I do not own anything else.

Eternal

Chapter 1

Carnivals weren't Ana's first pick of places to be. There were people everywhere, and people weren't her favorite thing to be around, for starters. She always loathed the fact that there were parents who never seemed to grasp the idea of watching their offspring, so children ran about, laughing and giggling and almost tripping the other carnival goers. Or they cut in line, too excited for the games and the potential prizes they offered to realize their manners.

Ana snorted quietly, rolling her eyes as two blonde children did just that, running joyfully towards the giant stuffed penguin that was currently hung in the corner of the water gun game, and coming to halt right in front of her group.

"Hey, that's not fair!" Ronnie, her red-haired seven year old nephew whined up at her, tugging at her sleeve. "They budged!"

The blonde children were grasping the water guns with their sticky fingers, clearly covered in the remnants of blue and pink cotton candy, and started to play the game that should have been Ronnie and Heather's.

"It's okay, Ronnie," Ana replied calmly. "You'll get your turn."

"But we were here first!" the ginger boy continued, scrunching up his freckled face at his aunt, threatening to start the water works if he didn't get his way, something his parents had allowed him to relentlessly do in his short life. It made Ana grimace every time the child tried it, because she never let him get his way with this behavior, determined for her nephew not to grow up to be a spoiled brat. Even so, every time she stayed silent during the tantrums and

the screaming, she cursed the fact that she didn't see those kids enough for her interventions to make much of a difference. Yet she pressed on.

"I know, Ronnie," she said, giving the boy's hand a reassuring squeeze. "Those kids are just excited and forgot their manners. What do you want to do after this game?"

"Can we go on the Ferris wheel?" replied the soft, sweet voice of Heather. The 5 year old brunette was grasping Ana's other hand.

"Yes, we can," Ana said, smiling down at the girl. Her heart always fluttered at the sight of her adorable niece, with her soft brown curls and big brown eyes that seemed to always shine.

"I want to pick!" Ronnie whined, abruptly stopping the flutter and making Ana's jaw tighten.

"You picked this time," she said, always reminding herself to stay patient. "Now it's Heather's turn."

"But the Ferris wheel is stupid!"

The blonde children were done with their game, not having won anything, disappointment etched on their faces as they walked away. Ana looked around the crowd, not seeing any parents waiting nearby, wondering who on earth would ever feel comfortable letting kindergarten-aged kids run around a crowded place like this alone.

This was Ana's first visit to the small town of Derry, her sister and brother-in-law having moved there only a few months prior. She was in her sophomore year of college at Pennsylvania State University, having gotten a pretty hefty scholarship to go there, and was there visiting on summer break. She found the town to be charming in quaint the first couple of days she had been there, loving the safety she felt while roaming the streets and the friendly waves she got from passers by. But the feeling of safety was short-lived, as a child had gone missing. A girl a couple of streets over from where Ana's sister lived disappeared, with no trace to be found, and yet there were unsupervised children running seemingly unaware of any danger.

In fact, Ana had been very surprised that her sister Cassandra had suggested she take the kids to the carnival by herself so she and her husband could have a date night. She had known her sister to be rather protective of her children, but she had agreed to it without an argument; after all, how long had it been since the two have had a night alone since moving to Derry and starting new jobs? So here they were.

After Ronnie won a small stuffed rabbit, the trio were off to the Ferris wheel. Ronnie had stopped his incessant whining after Ana threatened not to buy them any kettle corn if he didn't stop, and the ride was a peaceful one, Heather pointing out the bright lights of the other rides and giggling at a clown with a red balloon that was in the middle of the bustling crowd. Ana turned her gaze from the animal tent to look at this clown that Heather was laughing at.

Her heart fluttered again, but this time not in love or adoration. Ana had never really cared for clowns, but this one was off the charts creepy with his large head and towering height. As they descended on the wheel one last time and could see his face more clearly, she became increasingly uneasy. He was smiling a some kids gathered around him, but his toothy grin made her stomach churn.

"I think it's time to go home," Ana said, unaware at how firmly she was now gripping both children's hands as they got off their bench and started walking.

"What? I thought - " Ronnie started, but Ana cut him off.

"I'll bring you to the park tomorrow," she stated curtly, "I don't feel good and we need to go home.

"Auntie Ana, I'll make you chicken soup," her sweet niece said, her little legs scurrying to keep up with Ana's fast gait.

"Stop running," Ronnie protested, and Ana finally realized she was acting little bit like a crazy person.

"I just want to get home."

"Where did the clown go?" Heather asked quietly, making Ana snap

her head around to check in a slight panic.

"I don't know," she admitted, making her stomach turn over again.

"I wanted to see his red balloon," Heather said, sadness in her voice. It made Ana shudder to think that her little niece wanted to interact with it.

"They kept walking, nearing the gait that lead to the parking lot. As she spotted their car, the uneasy feeling became a sudden and searing need to turn and go back into the carnival. The panicked feeling she had first seen the clown was a drop in the bucket compared to what she felt know. She felt her heart beating hard in her chest, and her palms started to sweat.

"Auntie Ana, your hands are sweaty," Ronnie said, disgusted, ripping his hand away from hers. She nearly shoved the kids into the car, strapping them into their seats. She slammed their doors shut, and was about to get into the driver's seat, when she saw one of the blonde kids from earlier running in between the parked cars, laughing. Ana stopped short, looking around. There was no one else around, the other child no where to be seen, and once again no parents in sight. Her internal argument on what to do lasted a few seconds before she made a decision.

"Don't move," she said to the kids, turning on the radio and locking the doors.

"Auntie, where are you going?" Heather said, fear evident in the little girl's voice.

"I have to check on that kid. I'll be gone two seconds," she said, silently cursing herself as she left her niece and nephew.

She could hear Heather crying as she turned and ran towards where she saw the child. It made her heart break, and yet the burning, panicked need to go after this random kid in the parking lot took over her thoughts.

As she got closer to the cars where she had seen the blonde boy, she started to slow down, trying to listen for him.

"Kid?" she called, not knowing what else to call him, "Kid, where are you? I think your parents are looking for you!" Silence.

Then, giggling heard near the woods that started about a hundred feet away from the parking lot. A child's voice giggling and...something else.

She pressed on into the trees, using her cell phone as a flashlight. As she neared the voices, she noticed her breathing seemed deafeningly loud and tried to quiet herself.

"Jacob, do you want to see my circus tent?" she heard a gravelly, yet playful voice ask. She shined the light on it just in time to see the clown bending forward to hand the small blonde boy a balloon.

"No!" she yelled, jumping forward and grabbing the child's arm, yanking him away from the clown.

"Hey!" the boy yelled in protest, and the clown's gaze shot from him to Ana, golden eyes rimmed with red staring directly into hers. His gaze went from playful to angry.

"Come on," she said to the boy, turning to start running, but she tripped on a root and fell on her butt. The clown was still staring at her, the seconds seeming like eternity as she gathered herself and stood back up to flee, her grasp still on the child. His features changed from angry, to a calm, almost blank expression. In the darkness of night, the moonlight caught the shine of drool on his chin as he lifted his head to sniff the air, like a wolf catching the scent of his prey. Ana started to run, dragging the boy with.

"I don't like *people* touching my things," his raspy voice called out to Ana, followed by a manic laugh.

As they neared edge of the trees, instinct made her grab a sturdy tree branch from the ground, one that she might be able to use as a baseball bat-like weapon if she needed to. How they made it back to the parking lot without being caught by the insane clown, Ana didn't know, but she came into view of her PT cruiser.

"Thank God," she said, but then she heard screaming from the

vehicle.

"Let go of me!" the little boy protested, "you're hurting me!"

"You have to stay close, I don't know where the clown is!" she yelled, but let go of his hand to run towards the car, branch weapon in hand, where her precious niece and nephew were. As she got closer, she saw the source of their fear.

A giant spider was on top of the car, clawing desperately at windshield trying to get in. Dropping the branch without thought, Ana grabbed its back legs and started to yank. The spider growled in protest, but eight legs and disproportionately long claws helped it to hold on. The kids were still screaming.

She grabbed the branch and began clubbing, the hairy creature screeching in pain, finally ending its attempt to get into the car. It slid with a thud to the ground, turning to face Ana, and she hit it again with a satisfying crack as her weapon connected.

It transformed in front of her eyes, from the spider to the clown, and Ana's mouth fell open in absolute horror. Those golden eyes fell on Jacob, who was cowering behind Ana up against a car.

"You," he said, his voice pure venom, "owe me a meal."

Not having the time to process nor caring what the clown meant by this, she raised the branch again, ready to strike if she needed to. "Fuck you!" she yelled.

The clown leapt forward, and Ana closed her eyes and swung as hard as she could; she might not be able to stop the transforming spider clown but she was damn sure she was going to hurt him trying.

Her swing hit thin air, and she stumbled forward into her car. She opened her eyes, seeing nothing but Ronnie and Heather still screaming in the car. She turned to see that Jacob was still there, on the ground, cowering. But no clown or spider.

"Hey!" she heard a woman's voice shout, and a stern looking blonde woman was stomping towards her. "What are you doing with my son?"

"What? Oh, thank God - " Ana started, wanting to explain what happened, but the woman shoved her out of the way, reaching for her child. She scooped him up into her arms, and then turned to glare at Ana.

"What's the idea? Why were you out here with him?" she yelled.

"I found him in the woods," Ana said. "There was this clown, and - "

"Never mind," the woman spat, starting to walk away. "Can't trust anyone these days."

"You're right! Maybe you should try actually watching your kids next time!" Ana called after her. She was rewarded with a middle finger.

"What is with this town," she muttered under her breath, and then got into the car. "Kids, are you okay?"

"That spider was going to eat us!" Ronnie exclaimed, wiping snot from his nose.

"But Auntie saved us," Heather reminded him sweetly, and Ana let out a noise that was half sob and half laughter.

"No more carnivals," she said, starting the engine. "Let's get you kids home."

2. Chapter 2

Ana couldn't decide what seemed stranger to her: the fact that she and the kids were nearly killed by a shape shifting spider clown demon, or the fact that her sister and brother-in-law didn't seem to care.

She didn't dare think that they would believe her, of course. Who would think there could possibly some of monster in the woods outside the carnival, in quiet little Derry, that would be attempting to lure children and do who knows what with them? She'd probably get locked up in a mental institution.

But her insistence that someone, possibly a man dressed up in a clown, had been talking to a child out in the woods, and then that she and Heather and Ronnie were attacked at their car, was met with complete indifference.

"You're overreacting, Ana," Cassandra with an irritated wave of her hand. "You probably just saw one of the circus clowns and got creeped out. You never really cared for clowns."

"Cass, this wasn't just someone in a costume, he was going to take that kid - "

"He was not," she replied with a roll of her eyes, "Now stop talking about it before you scare the kids even more."

Ana's brother-in-law, Derek, had just helped the kids take off their jackets and was ushering them upstairs to get ready for bed. He reinforced his wife's statement by throwing a glare at Ana, silently telling her to be quiet.

Ana waited til the kids were upstairs before whispering, "Cass, what about the missing girl? Obviously there's something going on."

Cassandra took a sip of wine from the glass she was holding. "It's not our concern."

Dumbfounded silence followed for a few moments before Ana could

find her voice again. "What? How is this not our concern?"

Cassandra sighed. "Look, if you're so concerned maybe you should just go to the police station and tell them what's going on."

"Fine. I will. Just...be on the look out, okay?" Ana said, heading towards the door to leave again.

"Yeah, sure," her sister replied, taking another sip of wine. "Ana, just do me a favor. Next time you don't feel like watching the kids all night, just say it? Stop making up crap excuses to come home early."

"Cass!" Ana started, her voice going up a few octaves. "You think I'm making this shit up? I'm literally going to the police station right now!"

Her sister took another sip of wine as she headed up the stairs. Ana left after staring after her in disbelief.

Her conversation with the police had the same result. The officer she spoke with made sure she was patronized, reassured that nothing like this would ever happen in Derry, and Oh, by the way, the missing girl she kept mentioning? Maybe she ran way. It's not really anyone else's business but the family's, so stop bringing it up. Mentioning it will only going to upset people, and we don't want to unnecessarily scare the town's children.

By the time she got back to the house, she was half convinced she was going insane. It was late by the time she got changed into her pajamas and got ready for bed, but she couldn't help but peak in on the kids before she turned in for the night. Ronnie was asleep, so she left him alone. She found Heather still awake.

"Hey," Ana whispered as she walked towards the little girl's bed. The room was vibrant pink, with white lace and unicorn decorations everywhere, a kid's dream of a room in the daylight. Here in the darkness, it made no difference. The room seemed menacing, too still, like something was lying in wait to pounce. Heather seemed so small in that bed, like a vulnerable little bird with no defenses.

"Hi, Auntie," the little girl said, sniffling.

"Are you okay?"

Heather nodded. "Mommy and Daddy said the clown isn't real. So I'm not scared anymore." It was like she was trying to convince herself along with Ana. "And I was sleeping in the car. The spider was a dream."

"Heather," Ana said slowly, trying to find the right words as to not upset her niece. "Just promise me something. If anyone, or...anything makes you scared, make sure you tell me, okay? Because sometimes, those scary things are real."

"I promise," Heather replied, clinging to her stuffed unicorn. Her thumb went into her mouth, something Ana hadn't seen the little girl do in years. "Will you stay in here with me tonight?"

"Of course, sweetie," Ana said. Using some stuffed animals as pillows, she ended up falling into a dreamless sleep on the floor next to the bed.
She was awakened suddenly to the sound of Ronnie's screams, and jumped to her feet. "Heather stay here!" she yelled as she took off, slamming the door open and finding the large spider, rearing up and spitting sticky web at the boy. He was standing up at the head of the bed, trying to cover his face from the spray. Ana leapt between the two of them, expecting to feel the web hit her, but suddenly the spider was gone.

"Ronnie!" cried Derek as he rushed into the room, pulling the boy into his arms. "What's wrong?" Cassandra followed right after.

"The spider! The spider is going to eat me!" the child sobbed. Ana was looking around frantically, checking under the bed, in the closet, out the window.

"Ana!" her sister yelled, grabbing her by the shoulders. "Stop it!"

"Stop what?" Ana yelled back, shrugging Cassandra's hands off her. "That thing, it was in here! I saw it!"

"You're feeding into it!"

"Cass, he said he saw it and I saw it too!"

"Why are you doing this?" Derek's voice interjected. "Why are you trying to scare our kids? He had a dream, that's all."

"Just like Heather's dream? Of the same spider?" Ana argued, throwing up her hands. "God, what is wrong with you guys?"

"He heard Heather talk about her dream, and it gave him a nightmare," Cassandra replied coolly, shoving Ana towards the door. "Did you do drugs tonight? Is that what this is?"

"God, Cass, no!"

Her older sister's finger was in her face now, her best attempt at scolding, something she didn't do with her kids nearly enough. "If you keep this shit up, you're not going to be able to stay here anymore this summer. You hear me? I can't have you disrupting our lives like this!"

"Fine," Ana said, feeling defeated. "Fine, I'll just, knock if off, or whatever."

"Go back to your own room. The kids are fine."

Ana obeyed, but once she was in her room with the door closed, she stood to listen to her family. She could hear Ronnie crying still but couldn't make out the words. She hoped Heather had been able to fall back asleep.

Sighed, she turned away from the door to go to bed, and she suddenly felt a hand on her throat. Her eyes caught sight of the tall figure with the white face before she was slammed up against the wall with some much force it made her head spin.

She knew better than to scream at this point. Whatever was going on to make this town not notice the disappearing kids and this demonic activity in their midst, she figured this thing was the cause.

She tried to get better focus on the clown's face but her vision was swimming. The clearest thing she could make out in the dark room was his golden, glowing eyes as they looked her up and down.

"What are you?" the clown hissed in a voice that was both child-like

and deep at the same time. Ana let out a sound of disgust as his face bent down to her neck and he took a long, slow sniff.

"I'd ask you the same," she wheezed, attempting to pry his gloved fingers off her throat to no avail.

"I can't smell your fear. But I can smell...something," the clown continued, currently indifferent to what she said and her sorry attempts to free herself.

"Get off me!" Ana hissed, and much to her surprise, his grip lessened and she was able to scurry away from him, backing herself into a corner. His towering height alone was terrifying to be near, let alone the off-putting face and jagged grin that bore down on her.

"You owe me a meal," he said in a sing-song voice, taking a step towards her. "Pennywise doesn't like it when people touch his things," he continued, repeating the things he had said to her in the woods. "Lucky for you, I fed right after we had our little dance tonight."

Ana wasn't sure what he fed on, but she had an idea, and it made her stomach turn over. She wondered what little kid had been taken instead of the blonde boy she had saved.

"What do you want?" she asked, and the clown rushed towards her, his hand on her throat again, pushing her back and making her sit on the bed. He was standing over her, their differences in height with her sitting now making her feel tiny and helpless.

"You owe Pennywise," he repeated. "Pennywise will let you know how to repay him." His red lips turned into a terrifying grin, his eyes boring into her blue ones.

She felt her heart nearly beating out of her chest. He let go of her throat, making her cough, and walked backwards toward the door with a little bow. He opened it and disappeared on the threshold, and she was mesmerized for a few moments, trying to process what just happened and the fact that he hadn't tried to kill her, before reality came crashing down around her.

"The kids!" she breathed as she rushed towards the door and into the

hall. No clown or spider in sight.

3. Chapter 3

There was no mention of last night's incidents from Cassandra or Derek the next morning. Ana wasn't surprised at this point. Not wanting to start the arguments over again, she decided to leave it alone and not bring it up. She made breakfast for her sister and the kids, as Derek was off to work already by the time she hadn't gotten her tired body out of bed. She guessed that she had maybe slept for about an hour last night, and was surprised she could even fall asleep at all after everything that had happened.

For some reason, once the clown, *Pennywise*, as he referred to himself as, had left her bedroom and she had made sure the kids were fine, she had some sense of calmness. Nonetheless, her mind had been racing as she recalled last night's events, and now that she was awake again she couldn't help but think of the poor soul that he had referred to last night. *Fed*, as he referred to it. Ana was now sure that the missing girl hadn't just been taken somewhere.

She left the house shortly after eating, sure that Cassandra and the kids were fine, to try to get word of who had been selected as Pennywise's meal last night. As she walked around the small town, nothing really seemed amiss, something that Ana was coming to terms with. She wasn't even sure if it was worth the effort ask if anyone had heard anything.

Her wandering led her back to the carnival. It was too early for it to be open for the day, and the grounds gave off a much more ominous vibe now than it had at night, now that there were no noises or lights or sounds of laughter coming from it.

At first, nothing seemed out of the ordinary. Walking through the nearly empty parking lot and up the gates, she caught the site of a few workers moving about their day. No cops, no yellow tape marking off a crime scene. She eyed the ferris wheel warily, remembering her sense of panic when she had first laid her eyes on that clown. Now it just seemed so unassuming and lifeless.

She heard the sound of a man wailing suddenly, making her head whip around to see where it was coming from. She followed the

sound at a jog, not entirely sure she wanted to see what was causing the man's anguish. It led her to the bridge, where she found what she had been looking for.

The crying man was in a heap on the ground with a few people surrounding him, attempting to offer the man some sort of comfort. She slowed her pace and approached cautiously, not wanting to disrupt what was going on or cause any alarm.

"Adrian!" she could make out as she got closer. "I just love him so much! What am I supposed to do?"

"I'm so sorry Don," a woman rubbing his back was attempting to console him. "Those punk-ass homophobes will get what's coming to them."

"And if not, we'll take care of them," a man from the group chimed in.

Ana turned to walk away, knowing that she had been staring unapologetically at the group. As she turned she thumped into a warm body, causing her to yelp in surprise and jump back.

"Whoa, sorry miss," a tall black man said softly. "Didn't mean to scare you." He put his hands up in a none threatening gesture.

"No, I'm sorry," Ana said, finding her voice after nearly jumping out of her skin. It wasn't a scary clown. Just some regular guy. "I'm just jumpy this morning is all."

"Yeah, I can't blame you," the guy muttered, seeming almost to talk to himself more than her.

"Have you heard how this guy died?" she asked, hoping for some answers but not really expecting to find any.

"The story is that some guys jumped him and his boyfriend outside the carnival last night. Beat them both to a pulp and threw Adrian over."

"So...he drowned?" she asked.

"That's what they say," he muttered in that same low tone. Ana

noticed that he wasn't making eye contact with her, instead looking everywhere but. She decided to try her luck.

"Is that what you think happened?"

His head popped up at the question, his dark brown eyes finally meeting hers. "I have my theories."

"So do I."

He spent a few moments studying her silently before speaking again. "Have you seen what's written on the bridge?"

Ana shook her head no, and the man gestured for her to follow him. How she had missed it coming from the carnival she didn't know. In large, red letters, was painted "Come Home Come Home Come Home". A shudder went through her entire body.

"You can see it?" the man said, and she nodded. They stared at each other again silently.

"I'm Ana," she said finally, extending her hand. He took it tentatively.

"I'm Mike."

A few minutes later they found themselves in one of Derry's few diners, seated across from one another in a booth, coffee in hand. They had said very little on the walk over.

"So you can see him, too?" Ana whispered. "The clown?"

"I can, but it's been 27 years."

"What?"

"When did you see him?" he asked, taking a sip of coffee, no doubt trying to appear calm.

"Last night."

Mike set his coffee cup down with a clank, his hand visibly shaking slightly. "I knew it would be soon, but...it's almost surreal."

"What is?"

"Where did you see him?" Mike pressed on, ignoring Ana's question. She steeled herself, trying to keep in mind that this guy actually knew something.

"The carnival, well actually outside the carnival in the woods. Trying to grab some boy but I stopped it. Then he was in my sister's house where I'm staying."

"You stopped him? How?"

Ana didn't answer right away, instead choosing to take a sip of her own coffee, mulling the situation over. "You know, Mike, I seem to be answering a lot of your questions but I'm not getting answers to mine."

Mike shook his head, looking out the window. "There isn't time for that right now."

"Why?"

"I have to make some phone calls, try to get some people back here as soon as I can. It's crucial to trying to stop...it."

"I get it. I really do. But I'm a little eager to get some info out of you, Mike, seeing as you're the only other adult I've come across that even remotely gives a damn that this shit is happening. I thought I was losing my mind."

"I understand." Mike threw some money down on the table. "I will give you all the information I know, after I get a hold of everyone." He scribbled a phone number on a napkin, haphazardly shoving it into the palm of her hand while standing. "If you don't hear from me by this evening, give me a call. We'll meet up."

He left the diner without another word to Ana. She sighed, taking the time to finish her coffee and then stood to leave. Without warning, she started to have the same red-hot, searing sensation in her abdomen that she had felt last night. At the same moment, an old woman came bustling out of the bathroom, shambling up to Ana's booth and taking a seat without waiting for an invitation. Ana was

starting to realize that this familiar feeling seemed to be correlating with something sinister.

"You can have this booth. I was just leaving," Ana said, standing to get away without looking the old woman in the face, hoping that what her instincts were trying to tell her were wrong. She gasped as the wrinkled, pale hand shot out to grab her wrist without warning. She dared let her eyes graze over the face, seeing angry brown eyes looking back at her.

"You were meeting with that negro boy," she said, a toothy sneer appearing on her face. "It's not good to associate with their kind. It might not be good for your health."

A few heads turned to watch them, but no one said anything. Just as well, Ana thought. It's not like she expected someone to care, let alone jump to her rescue.

"I'll associate with whomever I please," she said, yanking her hand out of the woman's grip. "And at the moment it's not with you."

She started to walk away, when she heard a sinister chuckle. Recognizing it instantly, she shuddered, but kept going.

Ana was a few blocks down the street when she heard a voice call out to her: the old woman from the diner had followed her and was directly across the street. There was no way a normal elderly lady would have been able to keep up with her, walker and all.

"He's an old friend of mine, deary, and he's bad news. Best not see him again!"

Not knowing nor at the moment caring where her irrational stoicism was coming from, Ana came to a stop, turning the face...it. Not her.

"Do you think I don't know who you are?" Ana called back, hands clenching tightly into fists. "You can stop with the fucking disguise, Pennywise."

The old woman stood and stared for a few moments, and Ana held her breath. She expected a reply, or for it to approach her, but she just stood staring. Finally, Ana decided to keep walking. She didn't

get a few more steps before the clown appeared abruptly in front of her, and she smacked right into his costumed-chest, causing a few bells to jingle.

Ana took a few steps back, glowering up at the clown. This time, the gold eyes that bore into her angered her, rather than terrifying her.

"You're a rude, rude girl, Ana," he said, his low timber sending shivers down her spine. "Naughty girls ought to be punished."

"What do you want from me?" she asked, exasperated. "Are you going to eat me, like you ate that guy last night? I'm thinking no, or you would have done it already."

Her statement seemed to catch the demon clown off guard for a moment, as she watched his expression turn from playful to angry to expressionless. She guessed that he wasn't used to being challenged by his prey.

"You seem very brave for someone who knows what I do," he mused. "Although, I'm not convinced that you're...someone." Before Ana could respond, he was pushed up against her, doing that smelling thing that she wasn't so fond of. She could feel his hot breath on her neck and she heard a faint growl escape his lips. "I can't smell your fear." There was no anger or frustration in his voice, just a mere observation like he was commenting on the weather.

Ana gathered her composure as much as she could to form words again. "Maybe I don't have any."

The laugh that escaped those ruby red lips nearly made her legs buckle. "Oh, you have some sweet girl. I can see it on your face, in your body." She trembled as a gloved hand lightly brushed some of her dark auburn hair away from her neck. "Even if I couldn't see it, even if you said you had none, you couldn't tell Pennywise that you didn't fear for little Heather and Ronnie, eh?"

"Stay away from them!" Ana yelled, earning some looks from some pedestrians across the street. No doubt she looked crazed, standing there talking and yelling to herself.

The clown giggled menacingly, clearly pleased that he was breaking through the facade.

"If I don't, what can you do about it?"

In the next moment, he had disappeared, leaving Ana a quivering, sobbing mess. The stabbing feeling when he was around was gone, but the feeling was replaced by her breath catching in her throat, desperation filling every cell within her body.

Running and dialing a cell phone is not an easy feat, but Ana managed to do both as she raced back to Cassandra's house. She knew she was upsetting her sister yet again with the seemingly irrational fear for the kid's safety, but at this point she didn't care. Only when she confirmed with her sister that both kids were with her and safe did she stop to throw up on the sidewalk.

Once she reached the house, she burst through the doorway, being able to see for herself that Ronnie and Heather were both safe playing in the living room with some Lego's.

"Ana!" Cassandra yelled, slapping her sister in the face. "What are you doing?"

"The kids," Ana sobbed. "They're in danger, he's coming to get them - "

"Stop it! Just stop it!" her sister cried, and Ana looked past her to see the look of fear across both kid's faces. It broke her heart.

"I'm sorry," she said, wiping her nose on her sleeve as she sniffed. "I'm not trying to frighten anyone, especially them. "

"Ana, I think you should sit down," Cassandra said, her boiling anger seeming to simmer down. Ana could tell she was trying to regain her composure and appear calm in front of her children.

"I'm sorry," Ana repeated. Her sister gestured towards one of the recliners, and Ana sat.

"Ronnie, Heather, go upstairs and play," their mother commanded softly.

"Wait - " Ana began to protest, but was cut short by the sounds of sirens approaching. "What's going on?"

"Kids, upstairs!" Cassandra yelled this time, and the kids nearly scrambled over each other to get up the staircase. Once they were out of sight, she placed her hands on Ana's shoulders, looking her right in the eyes. "I'm getting you some help. I want you stay calm and just stay here. Can you do that for me, Ana?"

"You called the cops on me?" Ana said in utter disbelief. "I'm not crazy!" She could tell that the sirens were outside the house now. No where to run unless she made a break for the back door.

"No, not the cops...I mean, they're here, sweetie but I want you taken to the hospital."

Ana stood just as the first responders knocked on the front door.

"Ana, sit down! Don't make this harder on yourself!"

She started towards the back door through the kitchen, only to be blocked by Derek as he entered the door.

"Ana," he said calmly, his hands up on a sign of truce, "we just want you to go talk to some doctors. We're worried about you."

She heard some commotion behind her as a group of cops and paramedics entered the front door. She heard Cassandra say, "She's in there."

"Hello, Ana," came a stranger's voice, and she turned to see a round, middle-aged cop coming towards her slowly. "I'm Officer Dan. I'm here to help you."

"I don't need any help," she said, gritting her teeth, doing her best to sound calm. Maybe she could convince them to leave, if she could appear sane enough for them. "I think my sister just overreacted."

"She said that you've been upset the last couple of days. Maybe that you thought you saw something at the carnival," the cop continued in a soothing tone. Ana shot a glare at her sister. "Where were you this morning?"

"No where important."

"But you called her as you were coming home. She said you sounded hysterical."

"I was upset about...the missing girl, and then I found out about the man that was thrown over the bridge last night. I'm not crazy for caring about those things, am I?"

"No one said the word 'crazy'."

"No, but everyone here is thinking it." She glanced around the room, dozens of eyes on her apprehensively as they waited for her to snap. She sighed. "Ok, fine. If going to the hospital is what it takes to get everyone off my back, then I'll go."

There was an obvious release in tension after she said that. The Officer Dan gently began to guide her out of the kitchen by her elbow. "Can I just grab my phone charger? And maybe a change of clothes?"

"They don't let you have your phone in there," she heard one of the paramedics mutter.

"Wait, no phone in where?" she asked, panic beginning to set it.

"No worries, dear. If you end up spending the night, your sister can bring it to you later," Dan said silkily, and his nonchalant demeanor was starting to piss her off. The grip on her elbow tightened as he tried to keep her moving.

"I thought I was just going for an evaluation, where are you bringing me?" Ana said, her voice raising as she spoke. The other officers began to close a tight circle around her. "Tell me where I'm going!"

At that second, she doubled over in a sharp, searing pain that ran through her chest and stomach. "No," she whispered, attempting to catch her breath.

"What's going on, Ana?" she heard someone ask, but the room was spinning as the panic took over her brain.

"She's faking it. Just get her in the rig." More attempts to keep her moving towards the door.

"The kids!" she yelled. "He's here, just someone make sure the kids are alright!"

"This is what I'm talking about," she heard her sister cry, and Ana knew there was no way she was going to get it through anyone's heads that her niece and nephew were in danger. So she tried a different approach.

"Don't touch them!" she screamed, trying to throw off the men that were holding her so she could yell into the house. "You said I owe you, tell me what you want! Leave them alone!"

A sharp pinch was felt as the paramedic's needle was stuck into her arm, and the warmth and darkness of the medication that was forced into her started to take effect almost immediately. "Leave them alone, please..." was the last thing she muttered as she went unconscious.

4. Chapter 4

"Have you ever been diagnosed with depression?"

"No."

"Have you ever been diagnosed with bipolar disorder or personality disorder?"

"No."

A psychiatrist was scribbling Ana's answers onto a clipboard as they spoke. She wondered if he was brand new, he looked so young. Maybe he was still a student?
"Do you take any recreational drugs?"

"Can't you tell that by my blood tests?" she quipped, meeting his gaze defiantly as he looked up at her.

"Please answer the question."

"No."

"No, you don't take drugs, or no you don't want to answer me?"

"No I don't take any drugs," she replied, sighing quietly. "Trust me, this town is jacked up enough as it is."

"Have you had some trauma in your past? Perhaps something in your childhood that could be triggering these outbursts?"

"No."

"No loss of family members, or abuse from a relative that you haven't told anyone about? Anything like that that you'd like to disclose?"
Ana stared at him, annoyed that she had already answered the question. Whatever they had shot her up with at the house must have triggered a headache, too, because her head was killing her.

"Look, Doctor..." she looked down at the young man's name tag. "Ling. I know you're trying to delve deep into my psyche and uncover

some terrible experience that might explain the crazy. But there isn't anything, okay? I'm not unstable, or insane, or in need of any shock treatment. I just have some anxiety from the missing girl and the guy that died. Isn't that trauma enough to have a few minor breakdowns?"

Dr. Ling chose not to answer her question, something that people seemed to do a lot of in the town of Derry. "Your sister mentioned that you two lost your parents at a young age."

"Yeah," Ana said, folding her arms across her chest. "They died in a car wreck when I was 5. We went to live with my Aunt Rita, who was loving and caring and the best thing that could have happened to us after that."

"Where is she now?"

"She died four years ago. Cancer."

"Is it possible that somehow, deep down, you're still dealing with both of those losses? The loss of a parent, let alone two, can cause a lot of emotional damage in a young child. And then losing your Aunt, who raised you. How old were you when she passed?"

"Seventeen."

The doctor was silent for a few moments, taking the time to lean back in his chair and place a thoughtful finger on his chin. It made Ana want to slap the smug look right off his face.

"Here's what I think Ana," he said, leaning forward now, like he had some huge, earth-shattering truth to deliver. "I think you are traumatized by the people in town that have died recently. You've lost three parental figures, and now you're trying to compensate by being the protector of your sister's children. It's understandable that the idea of them getting hurt, or taken, or - "

"Eaten by a demon clown?" she interjected, silently berating herself for saying it. It wasn't going to help her appear any more sane.

"I suppose," he said slowly. "But the idea of anything happening to them is probably triggering any harbored feelings you have towards

losing your parents."

"Great," she said, fighting the urge to roll her eyes, "Good insight, Doctor. So now that you have me all figured out, what do I need to do to get out of here?"

"I don't think this is something we should rush," he replied, starting to stand up. "What's more important than one's mental and emotional health?"

"It's very important. You're right. But I have places to be."

"Where do you need to be that's more important than this?"

"I, uh," she started, caught off guard by the need to explain that she really, really needed to talk to Mike and get some answers. "I have some old friends that are coming into town for a reunion.

"Well," the Doctor said, that finger placed on his chin again, and Ana envisioned grabbing onto it and bending it backwards so far that it snapped. "Perhaps with some good behavior, we'll allow you to have a visitor or two. During designated hours, of course." With that, he left, and Ana was alone in her room. She stayed only for a few minutes, the desire to have some solitude overruled by the need to know if her family was safe making her venture out into the hallway.

She did her best not to make eye contact with any of the other patients. Even though at this point she figured she'd be able to tell when It was around, she feared the possibility that one of them would look back at her with golden eyes.

She reached the nurse's station, and one of the women seated there looked up at her, giving her a small smile. "How can I help you, Ana?"

Ana was a little unnerved that this complete stranger knew her name, then reminded herself that she had been brought here unconscious and had probably been the way for several hours. This might have been the nurse that had stripped her of her clothing and replaced them with the drab grey hospital gown she was currently wearing. She wasn't even sure what time it was now.

"Yes, um...am I allowed to have phone calls? I'm assuming you guys have my cell phone somewhere else."

"You are, but only during designated hours. And it's limited."

"What time is it now?"

"Five PM. You can make calls until six."

The nurse showed her to the one phone that the patients were allowed to use. Her first instinct was to call Mike, but she realized she didn't have his number.

"Excuse me, were you the one who went through my stuff when I got here?" she asked the nurse.

"Yes."

"Did you notice a napkin with a phone number in my jeans pocket?"

The nurse shook her head, stating that it was no problem for her to go and look for it. Ana was grateful for a kind soul in this place. Next to her, an old man was seating in the chair, his legs pulled up to his chest. He was rocking back and forth, muttering to himself. It was hard not to stare, but she pulled her eyes away so she could dial.

"Hello?" came Derek's voice after a few rings.

"Hi, it's me," Ana said, her voice breaking slightly as she spoke.

Silence for a few seconds. Then, "How are you?"

"Oh you know," she said, laughing softly. "As good as you can be in a place like this."

Her next question was going to be about the kids, but she knew it would only cause tension. Derek seemed to read her mind, though.

"Ronnie and Heather are good. We're taking them to a movie later."

"Oh, good!" Ana said, relief letting her relax in the chair a bit. The nurse was back, and handed her the napkin with Mike's number.

"Listen, I'm really sorry about all of this. I'm sure Cass doesn't want to talk to me right now. Just tell her I'm fine, and...I'll be home soon."

"Not too soon, though," Derek said quickly, "We just want to make sure you're better before you come home."

"Yeah, sure," Ana said, his words stinging. She felt tears well up in her eyes.

They hung up, and she took a few moments to ready herself before dialing Mike's number. He picked up on the first ring.

"Eddie?"

"What? No, sorry. This is Ana."

"Oh," Mike's low voice said, obviously surprised. "I was planning on calling you a little bit later tonight, I'm still trying to hear from everyone that I called today."

"I know, I'm sorry. This is the only chance I'll have to talk to you today." She explained as concisely as she could the encounter she had with Pennywise after Mike had left her at the diner, and how she ended up in the inpatient psych unit she was in now.

Mike let out an exasperated sigh. "I was hoping you could help us. Not going to be possible from there though."

"Help with what?" she asked, adding stubbornly, "and I want an answer this time!"

"A ritual. Something we need to prepare and then do together to kill It."

"If I can get out, I will help with all that I can."

"I want to do it in the next few days," Mike replied. "As soon as I can get everyone else here and on board."

"I'll do what I can. Listen, can I ask you one thing? I know you're busy."

"Shoot."

"Why can you and I notice it, but not the other adults?"

"That's something I was trying to work out myself," Mike replied. "I haven't encountered one other adult that notices, or remembers anything about these things happening, or caring. The friends I'm calling back probably can't remember what it was like here either."

"Why can you remember?"

"Because I never left. But something happens when people move away and time passes. Like It doesn't want them to come back to try something."

"I don't get why I can then."

"You had to have been to Derry before," he said with so much confidence that Ana almost believed him. "Probably as a kid."

"No, I haven't," she said. "I've never been near the area, never had reason to."

"Why are you here now?"

"My sister and her family just moved here. But they've never been to Derry either."

"That's the only way I know," Mike said, "I gotta go, Ana. Someone's calling back. Try to remember."

"...Okay."

She hung up, seeing that it was close to six now anyway. She was glad to have been able to get a hold of Mike and get a bit of information, but it just seemed to confuse things even more.

"You don't belong here," came a voice that made Ana jump, and she turned to see the old man wasn't rocking back and forth anymore. Instead, he was standing in front of his chair, pointing down at her and staring.

"Don't I know it," she said, standing to head back to her room. Normally a strange old man pointing and looking at her that way would be unnerving. But her nerves were shot from seeing much worse as of late.

She headed down the hallway toward her room, her thoughts still on what Mike had told her.

The nurse that had helped her with her phone calls came into give her some lorazepam to help her sleep. She had been apprehensive to take something at first, but was grateful for the little white pill after it had kicked in and started making her feel relaxed. Soon, she had drifted off to sleep.

"Ana," a whispering voice called to her. She was standing on a street, one that didn't look familiar to her but somehow, she knew she was still in Derry. Looking around for whoever was calling for her, she noticed that the neighborhood seemed eerily quiet, almost like someone had turned on the mute button for the town. The sun was shining high in the clear blue sky, making her squint to see.

"Who's there?" she called back. The voice didn't sound familiar to her.

"The ones who bound you," the whispers replied, but this time it sounded like it was all around her.

"What?" she asked, taking a few steps forward, trying to see if she could catch a glimpse of anyone. "What does that mean?"

"You don't remember your past."

"You're right," Ana replied, continuing to take tentative steps forward, placing her hand on her forehead to help shield her eyes from the sunlight. "I'm trying to remember Derry." She saw that she had hospital bracelets on, and looked down to see that she was still wearing her grey gown and yellow socks.

"That's not what you're forgetting." Suddenly, a figure in a dark red cloak was standing about fifty feet away from her in the middle of the street. It had a hood up, and Ana couldn't see the figure's face at all. "Follow me," it said, and Ana obeyed without question, feeling no fear or hesitation at

the moment. She felt a jerking in her body after a few steps, and somehow she was already standing next to the figure. They were in front of a run-down, abandoned looking house. It looked like no one had tended to it in many years, with dead plants and gnarled tree branches twisting down to the ground. The sight sent chills down Ana's spine.

"Where are we? Why are you showing this to me?" she asked. She still couldn't see the face, but she was starting to feel like the voice belonged to a woman.

"You have a purpose here in Derry, one that you're forgetting."

"I'm forgetting something, yeah, I think we've established something. *But what is it?"*

"This is where It resides. You must go there."

"And do what, exactly?"

There was a shudder that ran through the ground, almost like an earthquake had started, only lasting a few seconds. Ana felt a tingling that pulsed through her body, which was growing stronger by the second.

"There's no time. It's coming!" the figure cried, turning to run.

"Wait!" Ana yelled, more desperate for answers than ever, and reached out to grab the cloaked arm before it was out of her reach, but it was too late. Even as she extended her arm, she felt her body being yanked down towards the ground, as if an invisible string was pulling her down by her back.

She woke just as she would have hit the pavement, sitting up in bed with a start. The feeling that she was falling was absent, but now the tingling that she had felt in her dream was replaced by that red-hot sensation that she was accustomed to. The woman in her dream was right: It was coming.

Her hospital room was nearly empty, having only a mattress and a small metal toilet in the corner. The door didn't even go all the way down to the floor, in case staff had to force their way in in the event that a patient was trying to harm themselves. It was void of anything that could be potentially used as a weapon against a demon clown.

Deciding that waiting in a dark empty room for Pennywise to appear and do Lord knows what to her probably wasn't the best plan, Ana decided to head out to the common area.

She saw that it was nearly one in the morning, and there were no other patients out there. She glanced over at the nurse's station, seeing a few of the girls sitting at their desks and looking at the computer screens in front of them. She took a seat on one of the couches.

"Ana," she heard a nurse call. "Everything alright?"

"Yeah, just couldn't sleep," she replied, trying her best to appear calm. Screaming about a demon clown coming to get her, although her first instinct, probably wasn't going to help the situation. She looked around the room, waiting to see the first sign of the clown's figure coming to formation, but saw none. Still, the feeling didn't lessen.

She strained to hear if anyone else on the locked unit was making a sound. Seeing that the staff were doing their rounds and checking on all of the patients made her feel a bit better.

A hand on her shoulder made her jump slightly.

"I'm sorry," the hand's owner said, and Ana snapped her head around to see a tall young man in scrubs looking down at her. "I didn't mean to startle you."
"It's okay," she replied, trying her best to smile at him. "I just scare easy lately."

The man smiled back at her warmly. "You don't seem scared." The statement made her stomach drop to the floor. She searched the man's face to see if they were the awful golden eyes that she knew could look right through her. Against her better judgment, the first thing she noted to herself was how beautiful his face was. He had bright, soulful blue eyes. His cheekbones were so chiseled she could have sworn they were formed out of perfectly smooth, white marble. His lips were perfectly full and pouty, and for a split second she had the urge to kiss them without pause.

"I guess I'm a good actress," she said, shaking her head slightly to pull

herself from her sudden lustful thoughts. It made no sense whatsoever that she would be gushing over some random nurse, considering what was going on.

"You might be a good actress, but I can see you that you're tired. Why don't I walk you back to your room?" he asked kindly, offering a hand to help her up from the chair. Thinking this was a bit of an odd gesture coming from a staff member, Ana quickly glanced back at the nurse's station. One of them was watching them, then gave a quick smile and turned back to her charting when she caught Ana's eyes.

"I can get myself back there," she said, hesitantly accepting the man's hand. His grip was firm, but warm, and it sent tingles up her arm and down her entire body.

"I know you can. I just thought you might want a bit of company." Ana didn't reply, feeling a bit uneasy that the nurse was walking with her back to room despite how kind he seemed.

"I'm Robert, by the way."

"Nice to meet you," she said, nervously tucking her dark brown hair behind her ear. "I'd introduce myself but I'm sure you already know everything about me."

"Just what's in your chart," Nurse Robert replied, giving her a sparking smile. His perfectly straight, white teeth and kind eyes made her heart skip a beat.
Ana internally scolded herself for the lewd thoughts that were going through her head. It was a confusing mixture of apprehension and desire, and Ana was once again wondering if she was indeed going insane.

"Well, here we are," she said awkwardly, as their trip only took them down a short hallway before they reached her door. "Thanks for the company."

"Ana, why don't we have a little chat?" Robert said then, pushing the door to her room open, indicating that she go through first. A chivalrous act, yet one that made Ana's nerves even worse.

"Oh, I don't know," she started, crossing her arms over her chest. "It's late, and like you said, I am pretty tired - "

"It doesn't have to be long," he insisted, the smile leaving his face now. His blue eyes were so intense, Ana was certain he was looking into her very soul. "Just some therapeutic communication, just as your doctor ordered."

"At one in the morning?" she asked feebly.

"You're the one who can't sleep," came his sharp reply, and Ana knew she wasn't going to win this argument. Besides, maybe it would be better to have a strapping man in her room. She doubted he would be able to intervene if Pennywise decided to come knocking, but at least having some company might make her feel a little safer...even if he was being rather unpredictable.

She conceded, walking through the door, Robert following right behind her. She flinched when the door swung shut with a loud creak and a bang.

"Have a seat," Robert said, gesturing towards her bed. She complied without an argument, sitting on the edge of the bed, her hands on her lap as she twisted her fingers around nervously.

"Are you just going to stand there?" she asked, feeling awkward about being seated with the man being as tall as he was. It made her feel so small.

Not moving away from the closed door, he reached behind him and pulled a folding chair out of what appeared to be thin air, swinging it around in front of him and sitting.

"So, Ana," he started, his expression unreadable as he stared at her. "Your chart didn't reveal that much about you."

"I answered all the psychiatrist's questions earlier," she said, shifting uncomfortably in her spot.

"Yes, yes, you did. But not with a lot of detail."

"Is there something that you need to know?" she asked weakly. She

winced slightly, as the constant burning feeling in her chest seemed to grow.

Nurse Robert ignored her obvious signs of pain. "I'm curious about your childhood."

"It's all in there," she said through gritted teeth. "I told him about my parents, my aunt; those are kind of the big events."

"No, no, no. It's not the big events I'm after. It's the little things. Your memories, your experiences, your fears."

Ana stopped fiddling with her fingers, all of her focus on Robert now. He was staring at her with so much potency, she thought he might be looking right through her and at the wall behind her.

"What?"

"Your fears. I can't see them!" he said, and she stared at him in stunned silence for a few moments. His blank expression broke into that charming smile again.

"I'd like to go to sleep now, so if you could leave," she started in earnest, desperately wanting to get away but knowing her pleads were futile.

"But we're just getting started, sweet girl," he said, the smile still plastering his features. Against her better judgment, Ana made a break for the door, but Robert merely grabbed her by the waist and swung her back towards the bed.

"Now now, that's rude, Ana. Naughty girls need to be punished."

She wanted to scream, but her voice rose up and choked in her throat.

"I thought I told you to *sit down*," he sneered, his voice getting raspier as he spoke. Ana sat back in her spot, at a total loss as what she could do to get herself out of this situation. Then, she felt that stupid, erratic bravery bubbling up in her again.

"You wanted, to talk, so talk, *Robert,*" she replied. "What do you

want?"

He chuckled lowly at her words, making the hair on the back of her neck stand up.

"What I want," he started, standing up and walking toward her, coming to shove her over so he could sit next to her on the bed. His body was still between hers and the door, making an escape attempt impossible. "Is to know what you are."

"I don't know what you want me to say," she said, and grimaced as he scooted himself so close to her that their thighs were touching. "I'm a 21 year old woman from Pennsylvania."

"No, you're not," Robert argued, and he leaned over to press his face into her neck again, drawing slow whiff of her scent. She shuddered, her eyes on the door that might as well be a brick wall at this point. "Your smell is unlike anything I've ever come across here on Earth. It's intoxicating." She felt wetness starting to drip on the nape of her neck. Realizing he was drooling on her, she tried to scoot away, but he wrapped his long arms around her to keep her close.

"I'm a person. That's all. Please leave me alone," she pleaded quietly.

"No, no, Robert doesn't want to leave the sweet girl alone. Robert wants to consume the smell for all eternity."

"Please," she whined, struggling in his grasp.

"I can see your memories, only from the past few days. And I can see that you believe you're a *woman from Pennsylvania*," he mocked cruelly. "But nothing before that. No, no, you are not what you believe, sweet girl. You are something else entirely." He nuzzled his face into her neck, and she felt a conflicting combination of paralyzing fear and something else...arousal?

At the realization that a small part of her was starting to like what he was doing to her, Robert laughed into her hair. It made Ana want to punch his gorgeous face, but he had her arms pinned tightly beside her body.

"Sweet girl, you are so, so naughty," he taunted, "I'm going to punish

you now. You deserve it."

His tongue started to lick along her neck, and then up to her jawline.

"Stop it," she said, still struggling to no avail.

"You don't want Robert to stop it," he purred confidently, and then she felt sharp teeth impale the soft flesh at the nape of her neck. She inhaled a sharp breath between clenched teeth, doing her best not to scream as his pointed teeth dug into her deeper. Warm blood started to run down her collarbone and onto her chest.

Robert started to lap up her blood like a an eager child licking at the summer's first ice cream cone. Ana let out a grunt of disgust, and she was rewarded with a hand in her hair that yanked her head sideways so he could get at her skin with more ease.

It seemed like forever until he was done, and then he let out a low rumble and rested his chin on her shoulder, his vice-like grip still on her.

"Delicious," he said, giggling softly. He held into her in silence for a few minutes, allowing Ana the opportunity to shed a few tears. By now, her hospital gown was saturated with body fluids.

"My sweet girl is tired," he commented, laying them both down in the bed, Ana on the inside next to the wall, his long body spooning her. "Go to sleep."

"Yeah, right," she scoffed, sniffling a little. "Can you stop squeezing me? My arms are going numb."

To her gratitude and surprise, he complied with her request, and she stretched out her arms above her head for a moment.

"Turn towards me," he commanded then, and Ana drew her arms down and cross over her chest defensively.

"I don't want to."

"Robert gave you what you wanted," he pointed out. "Naughty girls should learn to do the same."

Not wanting to see how else he would punish her, she turned around, now facing that beautiful face, blue eyes looking into blue. She wondered when she would see gold again.

"Good girl," he purred, his hand running through her hair.

"What are *you*?" she asked, figuring she might as well try to get some answers if she was stuck next to this monster. "How can you see my...everything?"

"I am the Eater of Worlds," he replied smoothly, his hand moving from the end of her hair down to the side of her thigh. She shuddered, utterly flabbergasted that something so cruel could act so gentle.

"I don't know what that means," she admitted, and she found herself getting lost in those blue eyes. It was like he was pulling her into some sort of trance.

"Humans can't grasp what I am," he said, but she was quick to point out his logic.

"But you said I'm not human," she replied, and he giggled.

"You aren't. But your mind has the capacity of one right now. So you can't possible comprehend it. I am the superior being."

"So what am I?"

"Robert doesn't know," he said, booping her nose. She almost let out a barking laugh at how ridiculous it was. "But we will, when those monks come to see you."

"Wait...what?"

Giggling again. "I can see your everything, including your dreams."

"Except what I supposedly am," she argued, and a dangerous expression flashed on his chiseled features. Apparently, His Superiorness didn't like being challenged.

"It is hidden from me as of now," he admitted, a small growl escaping

his throat. "But monks can only keep things from me for so long."

"What do they want?" she pressed on, wondering how long his willingness to be this chatty would last.

"To destroy me, stupid!" he said with a laugh. "But they don't realize, I can't be destroyed. I am eternal." He kept laughing, and Ana was wondering if maybe he was just a crazy person, and she was just a crazy person, and maybe they belonged in this locked unit together. Once his giggling died down, he gave her a menacing glare.

"It's not that simple," he said, as if answering her thoughts. Suddenly, his head perked up, as if he was a blood hound catching a scent. "Robert has to go for now...some old friends are coming."

Mike and the people he was calling, she thought.

"Yes, old Mike is one of them," he said, standing and walking to the door. "Don't worry, sweet girl, we'll see each other soon enough!" Robert disappeared out the door. Ana reached up to her neck, hoping it was all just some dream or hallucination, but the shooting pain she felt when she touched it confirmed her fears.

5. Chapter 5

Ana was rather uninterested in the discussion that was taking place the next morning at group therapy. She hadn't slept a wink since Robert/Pennywise had left her room, and she was at the mercy of the program's schedule. She was woken up for some medications at 6am, and after some arguing with the nurses about the need to take them, she was instructed to be dressed and ready for the day by 7am. She found they used the term "dressed" rather loosely around there, as the only options were an exact copy of the gown she wore, or a set of maroon scrubs. She opted for the scrubs, thankful at least to have some pants on.

Breakfast had been rather uneventful, at least for Ana's present standards; there had been some yelling and squabbling from some of the other patients over who got to sit at the King's Throne (which one that was, she still wasn't sure, as the unit only had round tables), and one patient had to be restrained and taken out of the common area for attempting to gouge out his eyes with a plastic spoon. None of it phased her, however; she had been preoccupied with waiting for the burning feeling she now referred to in her mind as the 'crazy tingles'. It was a name that she wasn't sure if Pennywise would approve of, or see it as a jab to his obviously swollen ego.

She never felt it that morning. So here she found herself in a boring therapy discussion, listening to some teenage girl talk about the woes of being dumped, yet again, by her boyfriend. Ana eyed the young woman's wrists, where some scars from cutting were laid out for the world to see, as she seemed always to make a point to have her arms turned upward in front of her no matter what she was doing.

"What are *you* looking at, bitch?" the girl said suddenly, making Ana pull her eyes away and look elsewhere.

"Nothing," she said quickly, trying to be on her best behavior so she could leave soon rather than later.

"I saw you staring at me, you got something to say? Why don't you go gouge yourself in the neck again and then you can pass some judgment!" she sneered, referring to the bandage on Ana's neck. The

therapist in charge of group reprimanded the girl by calling her name sharply, gesturing for and aide to escort her out of the room.

"No, no, I'll go," Ana said, standing up. "She was talking, no reason to disrupt her."

"That's right, run, sweet little girl!" the cutter yelled as Ana was heading towards the door.

"What did you say?" she said, a little a too loudly apparently, because now everyone in the room was staring at her. "You know what, never mind," she added quickly, pushing through the door. She sat down on the only empty couch in the common area, which happened to be the same one that she had been on when she met Robert last night. Goosebumps quickly formed on her arms as she recalled the memory.

She saw Dr. Ling come out from the nurse's station and walk towards her. *Oh, great,* Ana thought to herself, knowing that he was going to be inquiring as to what happened to her neck. That's just what she needed, self-harm added to her list of crimes.

"Good morning, Ana," he said, taking a seat next to her.

"Morning," she mumbled, not wanting to look him in the eyes.

"I was wondering if we could chat in my office for a little while," he said, and the next thing she knew she was following him. She had no clue how she was going to explain her injury to him.

"The nurses are concerned," he started after they both were seated, he behind his desk and she across from him. "Can you tell me what you think they might be worried about?"

"The fact that you're wasting a bed on me instead of using it for someone who actually needs it?" she said hopefully, giving him a cheesy smile. His demeanor remained unchanged.

"They said you seemed fine last night, other than not being able to sleep right away. You know, when you come to a place like this, there needs to be a mutual understanding between staff and patient, that the patient will verbalize that they're feeling unsafe and thinking about hurting themselves. It creates trust."

"I *was* fine last night, Doctor Ling, I was - "

"And now we don't trust you," he added bluntly, and Ana felt her heart sink. "I was going to allow your sister to come and see you today, but I think that's out the question now."

"Wait, are you punishing me?" she asked, dumbfounded at his statement.

"It's not a punishment. It's a matter of safety. In fact, I think our current arrangement isn't appropriate for your treatment."

"What are you saying?" she asked, her heart rate increasing as fear pumped through her veins. "You're sending me somewhere else?"

The doctor pushed a button on his phone. "Nurse Leslie, please send the BERT team in," he said, ignoring her question. Within seconds, a group of people had burst through the door, and multiple pairs of hands grabbed her.

"Get off me!" she yelled as they tried to pull her out of her chair, but she was no match for the well-oiled machine that was working against her. Before she knew it, she was being dragged down a hallway she hadn't seen before and brought into a room with nothing but white walls, and a long metal table. "Please, I won't do anything, I promise," she sobbed as the group picked her up and roughly slammed her onto the table. She struggled as they put four-point restraints on her, all four limbs now out of her control.

"Ana," the doctor said with his back turned to her, in a soothing voice that she now knew was completely fake, "You need to calm down, or I will inject you with medicine."

Ana willed herself to do as the doctor said, stopping her struggling against the restraints and letting her tears fall silently.

"You good, Doc?" one of the security guards asked, and Dr. Ling nodded. Just like that, the team of man-handlers disappeared from the room, and Ana was left alone with the doctor.

"Now what?" she asked, her anger and fear combining into a sickening pit in her stomach.

"Now, we'll continue with your treatment," the young doctor replied. To her dismay, he was drawing something up from a vial with a long needled syringe.

"I thought you weren't going to give me anything if I calmed down," she said, trying to keep her voice as level as she could.

"It's necessary," the doctor said quietly, pulling the needle out of the vial and coming to stand at her side. "It's all necessary."

"Can I at least call my sister? Let her know what 's going on?" she asked, her eyes following the syringe that was getting closer and closer to her arm.

"No," he answered, and Ana winced as the needle pierced the skin on her arm. Within seconds she started to feel the effects of whatever he had injected her with. The room started to spin around her, and she felt like her mind was sinking into the darkness.

"Ana?" the doctor called her name quietly as he stood over her. "Can you hear me?"

"Mmm," she said, hearing him but at the same time, not really sure if she was even here with him or not. Was she dreaming? Maybe she'd wake up in her own bed soon.

Even though she was drugged, she startled a bit when she heard the ripping of cloth and the cold air hit her chest. The cold sensation was followed swiftly by a warm hand that started to fondle her breast.

She pulled at the restraints on her arms after the long seconds it took for her to register what was happening. "Get off...me..." she slurred. She could barely keep her eyes open. Even with her protests, the doctor continued his assault, taking a bandage scissors and cutting through the crotch of her scrub pants.

Everything seemed slowed down then, which added to Ana's desperation. She knew this wasn't going to end any time soon. The doctor had gotten brave now, and had started to crawl on top of the table, coming to rest between Ana's legs.

Then she felt it...the crazy tingles. She recognized it instantly, even

with the meds in her system.

She heard laughter then, and it took a while before she realized that it was her own. It seemed to distract the doctor, because he was staring at her angrily.

"Shut up, whore," he said, smacking her in the face. It only made her laugh harder. Even though her vision was swimming in and out of focus, she saw the clown's face appearing behind the doctor's shoulder, the golden eyes rimmed with bright red staring down at her. The doctor, otherwise occupied with trying to get his genitalia out of his pants, didn't seem to notice right away.

He stopped what he was doing when he heard the combined laughter of Ana and Pennywise, coming to realize that someone else had entered the room. He slowly turned his head, and let out a blood curdling scream when he saw not a clown, but the rotting corpse of an old Asian woman standing there. Her eyes were milky white, and the skin was falling off her bones in various places. She reached her disintegrating had out towards him, and he fell sideways off the table with a loud thud.

"Zhang, what are you doing, you dirty boy?" she wheezed, and he continued to scream. "What will your father think when he sees what you do?"

Ana did her best to stay awake, the medicine fighting her as she watched her attacker being reduced to a terrified puddle on the floor. He was scooting himself backwards on the floor until he hit the wall, the old woman getting closer and closer until she was right in his face.

She heard the door open and feet pound on the floor as people rushed back in. One nurse screamed, immediately trying to get Ana out of the restraints, while another ran up to the screaming doctor, apparently unable to see the rotting corpse that was right in front of him.

"Doctor Ling, what is it? What's going on?" someone was yelling, and Ana was being helped off the table and being guided out of the room. As she turned her head slowly to get one last look at the chaotic

scene, she saw that the woman had been replaced by the clown. When they locked eyes, he gave her an energetic wave, followed by one of his toothy grins.

Ana was released a few hours later after the barbiturate the doctor had given her was out of her system. Apparently, the unit had a hard time finding proper doctor coverage since the one on duty was currently being admitted himself, and they had to release the non-acute patients out to the street. Luckily for Ana, the decisions on who would stay and who would go were made by the nurses. She wasn't sure or not if Robert had made an appearance when they were discussing letting her go.

6. Chapter 6

"I can't believe they let you out already!" Cassandra exclaimed as Ana got into her sister's car. She had been waiting in front of the hospital with a slew of other released psych patients. "You were there for one night. They can't possibly know that you're okay in that amount of time."

Ana had borrowed the teenage cutter patient's cell phone to call her sister for a ride back the house. Luckily, she had been able to get a hold of her on the first try, because the hospital was miles away from home and it was looking like it was going to rain.

Ana shrugged. "Guess they thought it was all just a big misunderstanding." She turned to greet Ronnie and Heather, who were both looking at tablets in the back seat.

Cassandra shook her head as she pulled away from the curb. "Then why were there a bunch of other people standing out there with you? Did something happen?"

"The psychiatrist was found to be unfit," Ana said dully.

"So that's reason to let a bunch of dangerous psycho's out on the street? Why can't they find another doctor?"

"'Dangerous psycho'? Is that you what you think I am, Cass?" Ana asked quietly, although knowing that the kids could hear them either way.

Cassandra scoffed. "Of course not, Ana, don't put words in my mouth." She glanced at her sister, eyeing the white bandage. "What happened to your neck?"

Ana reached up to touch it, as she had almost forgotten about it. "I got attacked by another patient."

"Oh God, Ana, I'm so sorry that happened to you!"

"It's fine. It's over now," Ana said, looking out the window. It had started to rain, the droplets starting to accumulate and disrupt her

view the street as they drove. Probably better that way, she thought to herself. That way if there was a clown standing there she wouldn't be able to see it.

Once they were back at the house, Ana immediately got in the shower, the warm water seeming to wash away the last couple day's events. She realized that she hadn't gotten to bathe after being soaked in her own blood and Pennywise's drool...and after being assaulted by Dr. Ling. As the drugged memory of his hands on her chest came rushing back to her, she tried her best to block it out.

What seemed to work well was picturing the image of him on the floor, shrieking in terror as Pennywise's old woman form approached him. She found herself wondering if the woman had been his mother or grandmother whose memory haunted him. Either way, she felt surprisingly grateful for the shape shifter's sudden interference; the feeling made her feel like a horrible person.

A few minutes later, she was dialing Mike. The overwhelming grief was evident in his voice when he answered. Ana was informed that the friends that he had called had returned to Derry, all except for one. Stanley was dead.

"Oh, Mike, I'm so sorry," she said, at a loss at what else she could possibly say. "Is there anything I can do?"

"There is. The Losers - I mean, my friends and I are going to take the night to discuss a plan. With Stanley gone I think we're going to need your help now more than ever."

"Do you want me to come now?" she asked, hearing crying in the background.

"No, probably not tonight. Can you wait for my call tomorrow?"

"Yeah, of course."

"There is one thing I need you to do tonight," he said cryptically. "I need you to find something from your past from when you were in Derry before. It's important for the ritual I told you about."

"Mike," she said, taking a shaky breath. "I still haven't been able to

remember *anything* about Derry from before. I mean, I feel like I have a pretty good grasp on where I was when I was a kid, and Maine wasn't one of them."

"You have to try," Mike pressed. "It's important. Maybe go to a part of town you don't remember being in before, it might trigger something. Just be careful...It might be watching you. I know It's watching all of us."

"Oh don't worry, I know when he is."

"What?"

"I mean, the feeling is pretty overwhelming, isn't it? It would be pretty hard to ignore it."

"You can tell when It's there? Even if you can't see It?"

"Yeah...can't you?"

"No." There was silence for a few moments. "Ana, listen, I gotta go. We can figure this out tomorrow. Just work on getting a token of some sort." They hung up, and Ana immediately grabbed her jacket and some rain boots, intent on doing just what Mike said.

"Where are you going?" Derek, who was putting away some dishes, asked after Ana came down the steps, eyeing her jacket and boots.

"I just need to take a walk," she said nonchalantly. He raised an eyebrow at her.

"In the pouring rain? You're going to get sick."

"I'll be fine," she said, as Cassandra was entering the room, Heather following her closely. "Hey, Cass? This might sound kind of weird, but...have we ever been to Derry before?"

She saw her sister exchange glances with her husband. "You mean, the town we're in right now?"

"No," Ana said, knowing this was just going to add to their ammo proving that she was crazy. "I mean, like when we were kids."

"No," her sister said slowly. "Why would you think that all of a sudden?"

Ana shrugged, trying to come off as casually as she could. "I just have a feeling."

Her sister nodded slightly, then bit her lip, a sign she was mentally wrestling with what she was going to say next. "Ana, why don't you just stay home tonight? There's no reason to go out there in the weather like this, especially since it's going to be dark soon."

"I just need a breather, that's all."

"But," her sister continued to protest, and Ana could see she was trying not to lose it and snap at her, "It's creepy at night, you don't what crazy person is wandering around - "

"But this is Derry, Cass! Haven't you been insisting on how safe it is here? Nothing to worry about, right?" Ana said with enthusiastic mock cheerfulness, and her sister looked at her like she had slapped her in the face. *If she only knew that Pennywise could care less what time of day it was when he comes around,* she thought to herself cryptically. She sighed then, weary with the roller coaster of emotions she'd been dealing with recently. "Look, Cass, I just need to go, okay? I won't be out too late."

"You're treading on thin ice, little sister!" Cass said as she walked towards the entryway.

"Don't worry, I'll be sure to say 'Hi' to my drug dealer for you!" Ana called mirthfully as she walked through the front door. As she walked down the street aimlessly, she began recalling all of the things her sister had said and done in the last couple of days, and she knew her hostility towards her was warranted. She tried to remind herself that her sister couldn't help it, couldn't see any of it through Ana's eyes. It was all because of Pennywise and whatever hold he had on this town. It wasn't fair to take it out on her sister. She needed to focus her aggravation on the demon clown.

She walked past a few familiar parts of Derry she had been to. The drug store, library, and grocery store didn't help her, didn't trigger

any magically repressed memories. After an hour or so, she decided not to worry about where she had been before, and let her feet lead her wherever. The rain didn't let up and the sun was almost down as found herself in some random neighborhood, walking past some cute houses that had probably been build in the 1950's. Most of them seemed to be well cared for, updated with modern siding and windows. She felt disheartened as she realized that all these unsuspecting families were at Pennywise's mercy, and they'd probably never wake up to it. Whatever spell he had cast upon this town appeared to be everlasting and imperceptible to these people.

Ana was hopeful that she could get some answer's from Mike when she saw him tomorrow. Maybe he could shed some light on why she could sense Pennywise, and why he had kept insisting that she wasn't human. Realizing that it was probably his way of trying to play mind games and make her go insane was a likely possibility, she still couldn't shake the feeling that something about her was off.

Her internal monologue was disrupted when she realized she was standing in front of an old, rather run-down looking home with overgrown plants and gnarled trees...the house from her dream with the cloaked figure.

"Well," she said quietly to no one but herself, wrapping her arms around each other in an attempt to ward off the sudden chill that went through her, "here I am, dream lady."

Besides the overall feeling of dread that she felt while looking at the house, nothing really seemed out of the ordinary. The rain kept on falling. She could see lights on in a few of the neighbor's houses, and a car was pulling into a driveway a few lots down. She stood for a few minutes, as if she were waiting for something to happen.

Nothing did. No 'crazy tingles', no movement from the house. She jumped pretty badly when a lid off of a trash can fell to the ground with a clatter and a cat tore down the street, screeching. She was about to turn and go a different direction, when she suddenly felt like someone was watching her. It made her want to turn and run away, but still not wanting to seem like a random crazy lady out in the rain at night, she started to walk across the street. Then, it was like she started to feel something beckon to her. It made her stop in the

middle of the street and look up at the house again.

"*This is where It resides. You must go there."*

It sounded like the whispering woman's voice from her dream. Whether it was a flash of a memory, or if she was hearing it again, she wasn't sure. It sounded once again like it was all around her.

"Why?" she called out into the air, the raindrops no doubt drowning her voice out. "What am I supposed to do?"

"*Go there, and you will know,"* the voice whispered back, sending shivers down Ana's spine. She felt a tug on her spine, like someone was pulling her towards the house. As she took a few forced steps towards the fence, panic started to set in.

"No!" she cried, and now it felt like she was being shoved. She pulled her hood down and whipped her head around, but she didn't see anyone. No Robert, no old woman, no Pennywise. The street still appeared to empty.

Pure instinct kicked in, and she took off at a run down the street away from that house, no urge in her except to get away as fast as she could. Only when she arrived back to her sister's, soaking and shivering, did she wonder how in the world she managed to get away. More mind tricks, she assumed.

Cassandra fussed over her for a few minutes, reminding her that she and Derek had both told her not to go out there, and what was she thinking, and maybe she needed to go back to the doctor and get on some medication permanently. Only when her sister suggested that she was going to traumatize her children did Ana slam the bedroom door in her face. Despite the confusion and terror she was feeling as she crawled into bed, fatigue won the battle of wills, and she was sleeping as soon as her head hit the pillow.

The call from Mike the next morning was what woke Ana up with a start, and she felt panicked for a few minutes before she realized she was still in bed at her sister's. She half expected to be lying on a cold metal table.

He asked her to meet him at the hotel. When she asked him which one, he calmly pointed out that there was only one. She had a quick breakfast with Ronnie and Heather, and she found herself asking them if she was scary.

"No, Auntie," Heather giggled, taking another bite of her cereal.

"And remember what I said?" she continued carefully. "If something else is scaring you, tell me or your parents. Okay?" She looked pointedly at Ronnie, who was playing with his food and not looking at her. "Ronnie," she pressed. "Is there something you want to tell me?"

"It's not really scary," he said, still dragging his fork around in his plate of scrambled eggs. "But, there's been someone talking to me from the bathtub."

Ana's heart skipped a beat. "For how long?"

"Just last night," he replied, and she silently cursed herself for not being home when this was happening.

"What did it say?"

He scrunched up his nose, as if trying to remember. "I don't know. He asked if I liked kettle corn, and I should come to the carnival. And he asked me about you."

Ana swallowed hard, a large lump forming in her throat. "What did he ask?"

"Just if you were a good Auntie, and looked after me and Heather."

They were interrupted by Cassandra and Derek coming down the stairs and coming into the kitchen. "Good morning," Derek said, and was startled when Ana suddenly rushed forward, her finger in her older sister's face.

"Don't you *dare* let these kids out of your sight, do you hear me?"

"Ana, what the hell - " Cassandra started, but she was cut off abruptly.

"No! Just shut up and listen to me! I have to go. There's something I have to do, and it's to keep these two kids *safe.* I wish I didn't because leaving them is the absolute last thing I want to do right now. You have to *promise* me that you'll watch them close today." She stared her sister down, not blinking, not moving.

"I - I promise," she said, her voice quivering. Ana ripped herself away from her sister, going to hug the kids tightly before heading towards the door. "And don't go near that fucking carnival!" She turned and looked at them one last time before saying, "I love you all very much."

She sobbed as she walked out the door and down the front steps, hugging herself tightly. She gave herself only a few moments to break down, however, and then pulled herself together. She took off towards the hotel in a run.

As she reached the hotel, she saw that Mike was standing outside in front of it on the sidewalk, waiting for her.

"Hey," she said, sniffling once, trying to make her voice sound normal.

"Hey," he replied, opening the door and gesturing for her to come in. "Do you want a coffee or a tea?" he asked as they walked through the lobby.

"No, I'm good thanks," she said. They stared at each other for a few seconds before Ana spoke. "Are your friends here?"

"No, they're off finding their tokens," he replied. She followed him to a staircase, and up they went a few floors before reaching what seemed to be his studio apartment. There were papers and artifacts everywhere. He gestured for her to sit at his desk, and she obliged, as much as she hated that it reminded her of the doctor's office from the day before.

"Good to see you're out of the hospital," Mike said, clearing his throat.

"Yeah, thanks to our good friend Pennywise," she said, sarcasm in her

voice but truth in her statement. He gave her a confused look, and she explained what had happened. It took him a solid thirty seconds to find his voice after that.

"It influences the town," he started to explain. "That doctor might be the kindest man in the world, but somehow It makes people...do evil things."

"Then why did he come in and basically save me?" she questioned.

"I don't know. Probably to mess with your head," he admitted. She nodded, knowing it was probably true.

Mike started from the top, explaining to her what he knew about cursed Derry as a child, what the Losers Club went through all those years ago as children, and how he had stayed behind so someone would remember. He explained all of the things he had learned over the past two decades. The amount of time he had spent trying to understand Pennywise must have been astronomical, Ana thought to herself. This man was obsessed.

Ana was relieved to finally get so many of her questions answered by this man. It started to make a lot more sense now, knowing that Pennywise, or "It", as Mike kept calling him, was some evil entity that fed off people's fear. That he had the power to manipulate people's perspectives and influence the entire town was probably just the tip of the iceberg of what this entity could do.

"But what I don't understand," Ana said to him, "Is that he says he can't smell my fear." Mike looked at her strangely. "He knows that I'm afraid, but he can't smell it, and...he said that I smell good to him. But he doesn't think I'm human."

"Maybe he thinks that because you can sense when he's in the room," he ventured. "He doesn't like that you have some advantage and that's how he explains it."

"But...why can I sense him?" she asked shakily. "Is there some connection that I don't know about? And he said he can't see anything from my past except from the last couple of days." She groaned slightly, clutching her chest, suddenly feeling that familiar

feeling.

"I don't know, Ana," Mike replied, suddenly standing up behind his desk. "What's wrong?"

"He's coming," she gasped. In an instant, maniacal laughter began to fill the apartment. Mike pulled a baseball bat from under his desk, ready to strike.

"Ana," Pennywise's sing-song voice said from behind her, and she forced herself to stand and turn around. She saw him in all of his terrifying glory standing a few feet from her, holding a single red balloon as he stared at them. "I told you it wasn't good to associate with his kind. He and his friends might not be bad for your health, but maybe they're bad for someone else's!" He laughed lowly again as he stepped forward and grabbed her by the neck by one hand, lifting her into the air. She gasped and choked as his grip tightened around her trachea.

"Let her go!" Mike yelled, but the clown ignored him.

"Remember what I said," he continued mockingly at Ana, "You *owe me a meal.*" Ana stared wide-eyed into the gold, fear gripping every fiber of her being. She heard a war cry come from Mike as he rounded the desk with bat in hand; before he could swing, Pennywise had dropped her and was gone.

She took a few deep breaths before scrambling to her feet. "I have to go!" she shrieked, heading towards the steps. Mike grabbed her arm, yanking her towards him roughly, making her look at him.

"You can't! We need you for the ritual!" he bellowed at her.

"Mike, he's going after the kids!" she yelled back, trying to yank her arm out of his grip. When he didn't let up, she delivered a quick kick to his shin. Surprised by her outburst, Mike let her go.

"I'm so sorry!" she cried as she raced down the staircase, her aching muscles carrying her back through the lobby and out the front door. Mike didn't go after her.

Her heart nearly fell out of her body as she approached the house at a

dead run, seeing police cars parked nearby on the street, lights flashing. She burst through the front door, her eyes falling on her sister, who was crying so hard a police officer was keeping her from falling to the ground. She looked around the room, her eyes landing on Derek, and then Heather.

Before Ana could find her voice to ask, her sister was screaming, "Someone took Ronnie!"

Ana fought the urge to throw up. "Who? Who took him?" she asked, her vision starting to go blurry, the world spinning around her. She caught the site of red out of the corner of her eye, following it to the living room, where an officer was taking pictures.

Written in large, bloody letters on the white walls, read "PAYMENT RECEIVED".

7. Chapter 7

She could just leave town.

The thought went through her mind for a split second before Ana buried it down deep inside herself, not ever wanting to think it again. The thought of abandoning her family in a crisis like this made her feel like a monster.

But oh, would her life be so much simpler. She wouldn't have to worry about the kids again; after all, they aren't hers. And she told, no *demanded,* that her sister watch those children closely, and still it still ended up like this. She warned her! What a useless piece of shit mother-

Her vulgar thoughts were interrupted by a police officer calling her name.

"Ana!" the noise in the room came rushing back towards her, pulling her out of her thoughts. She found herself seated at the kitchen table, Cassandra sobbing next to her, Derek standing while holding Heather. Heather, her darling niece, safe and warm in her father's arms. The thought brought her mind again to Ronnie, poor stubborn and bull-headed but precious Ronnie, his whereabouts unknown.

"What?" she snapped back angrily at the officer. She recognized him from the other night when she was forced into an ambulance.

"Again, I repeat myself: where were you tonight?"

She shook her head in disbelief, the rage inside her boiling so hard she was clenching and opening her fists. "What the hell does it matter where I was? Get your asses out there and look for my nephew!"

"You're avoiding the question. And with your uh, recent history, I think it's best if we have a good handle on what you were up to this evening," he replied coolly. "Wouldn't want anyone to think you were involved."

"Jesus Christ," she hissed, "I was out walking around."

"Anywhere in particular?"

She was about to start cursing, when an image of the old abandoned house crossed her mind. "The house on Neibolt. What if he's there?"

The officer stared at her numbly. "Why would your nephew be there?"

"Oh, I don't know, because it's old and abandoned and creepy, and if someone kidnapped him they would probably want to bring him there?" she was practically yelling at this point. Even as she was saying the words and feeling the unbridled rage, in the back of her mind she knew that this wasn't going to be a productive reaction. Then Mike's words came back to her: *It makes people do evil things.* Once she realized that his influence was probably making her act like a lunatic, she was able to push down the anger a bit.

"Look, all I'm saying is, that house is sitting there empty and that would be the first place I'd look," she continued calmly. The officer had the same dull expression on his face. He didn't care.

"Lucky for us, you're not calling the shots around here, are you?" another officer chimed in.

"This is ridiculous," Cassandra interjected irritably at the cops standing around them. "Are you going to look for him or are you just going to sit here and argue?"

"Ma'am, we just need to make sure your sister wasn't involved."

"If you think for one second that Ana would do anything that would harm her nephew, then you're a hundred times crazier than you think she is!" she scolded. If they had been in a different situation, Ana would have sarcastically thanked her for the nice comparison. Nonetheless, it was good to know that her sister didn't think that lowly of her after all.

The interview lasted only a few minutes after that. They had little to go on, other than Cassandra had heard Ronnie screaming and when she ran to investigate, the back door was wide open and there was no sign of them. She had been upstairs putting away laundry with

Heather by her side, and Ronnie was downstairs alone. Ana decided she wasn't going to bring it up, ever.

"I'm going to take the car and go look for him," Derek announced, handing his sniffling toddler off to his wife. "Ana, why don't you come with?"

"No," she said quickly, standing up. "We can cover more ground if we split up."

He nodded in agreement. "Okay. I've got some coworkers lined up to start driving around, too."

"Good," Ana muttered. She knew none of this would probably amount to anything anyway. Pennywise had him and it's not like they'd be sitting around at the library or playing in the park. As soon as she knew Ronnie was gone, she knew where she'd have to go. She almost felt bad for suggesting that the cops go check out Neibolt house, as it would probably just lead to their gruesome deaths.

She made a point to hug and kiss Heather before leaving, giving her a few extra I-love-you's.

"Is Ronnie coming home soon?" her soft little voice asked after, and it made Ana tear up.

"Of course, sweetie," she said, hoping to death that she wasn't lying. Ana was actually surprised that Cassandra was as emotional as she was considering the influence Pennywise had over the town. She wouldn't be surprised if in a few hours, she'd just shrug her shoulders and say 'Oh well!' about the whole thing. And Ronnie, given he was still alive now, wouldn't have a chance in hell being found.

"I'm sorry, Cass," Ana said, giving her sister one last hug. "I'll do everything I can." She left the house again, this time bound for Neibolt house.

As she walked, part of her wondered if the right thing to do would be to go back to Mike and help his group. But for some reason she knew that bringing some of the clown's old 'friends' probably wouldn't help the situation. She knew he had done this to hurt her, to punish her

for meeting with Mike, for plotting with him.

She considered that maybe this whole thing was a ploy to get one less person to be able to help with the ritual. Right now, she didn't care. All she cared about was getting Ronnie back.

It seemed like it took forever and also no time at all for her to reach that house again. She found herself staring at it from the street for a little too long before forcing herself to walk to the door. She knew that Pennywise was there, the familiar tingle coursing through her.

"Hello?" she called once she stepped inside. The pungent smell of the old house was overwhelming, a combination of rotting flesh and moth balls. She coughed a bit, pushing aside the cobwebs as she carefully started to make her way through the entry hall. "Ronnie?" she asked into the deafening silence.

She gasped when she heard running footsteps behind her, seeing the flash of a red-haired child running down the hallway. All sense of preservation leaving her, she ran after it. "Ronnie!" she yelled, coming up to a locked door, but unable to get it open. She tried the handle a few times, then pounded on it.
"Ronnie, are you in there?"

A child's laughter answered her, and she again saw the flash of a running child in her periphery, and she followed. This time, she came to a skidding halt as she nearly fell right through a part of the floor that was completely gone. She looked down the gaping hole and could see down to the next level, into an unfinished basement. She could see the opening of a well.

"Down here!" she heard her nephew's voice call. She trampled down the rotted wooden steps after it. Once she was in the basement, she approached the well tentatively, as there were no other apparent rooms down there that he could be hiding in.

"Down here!" she heard his voice again followed by a giggle, echoing up the well towards her.

"Fuck," she spat, looking down to see nothing but darkness. She knew there was no way that Ronnie could have just jumped down the well

and then live to happily call up to her. "Enough with the fucking games!" she yelled. Silence.

"Pennywise, knock it off! Show me where he is!" she kept yelling. This time, the giggling that responded was sinister, low.

"You're such a rude, rude girl Ana!" his cackling voice called up from the well. "You didn't say *please*!"

"I'm not the one being rude, you psychotic fucking clown!" she screamed back. After there was no response, she rolled her eyes and cried, "*Please* show me where he is!" She didn't hear or see anything for a few seconds as she stared intently down, expecting something to happen. She sighed in exasperation, then tripped and fell backward as Pennywise's face was suddenly hurdling up towards her. He jumped right out of the well, landing to squat with his feet on other side of her torso, his face coming inches in front of hers. She was still trying to catch her breath as he giggled in her face, his uneven teeth seeming to gleam hungrily at her flesh.

"You really ought to stop with the swearing. There's a kid here, you know," he said, his unnerving smile unwavering as he spoke. He stood up suddenly, offering a hand to help pull her up.

"Where is he?" she repeated, this time without the cursing.

Pennywise clicked his tongue at her. "Always such a rude girl." Ana scoffed and quickly slapped her hand into his, and he pulled her to her feet as if she weighed as much as a feather. She yelped as he forcefully yanked her towards his towering figure, and he bent his head down to her neck to smell her.

"I missed you," he purred, and she felt a couple drops of his drool drip down on her. Grimacing in disgust, she tried to free herself from his grip and he let her take a few steps away from him. "C'mon, let's go see our little friend Ronnie!" he said, waving his hand towards the well. They both walked up to the edge, and Ana looked down warily.

"How do we - "

She was interrupted when he scooped her up into his arms wedding

style, and she let out a small yelp as they started to quickly descend the darkness of the well, taking a sharp turn into an opening in the side of the brick. Pennywise started walking, and Ana realized they were in the sewers.

"I can walk from here," she protested, starting to struggle in his grasp. He only held onto her more tightly.

"I know you *can* walk," he replied, "but you wouldn't want to get those precious feet wet, now would you?" He started to laugh.

She looked down at the disgusting water his shoes were sloshing in, and she mentally agreed with him that she probably wouldn't want to walk around in it.

"See, Pennywise can be a gentleman," he teased, and she replied with an indignant, "Ugh!"

They entered the huge cavern where Pennywise kept accumulated centuries of objects from the people he killed; Ana's eyes started to travel up the pile until she spotted Ronnie's small figure huddled down next to the bottom. He was digging through an assortment of torn and tattered stuffed animals.

Ana cried out to him, this time struggling so much to get out of the clown's grasp that he grew annoyed and dropped her. She hit the ground with a thud, although she didn't care now that she was splashing around in dirty grey water. She got to her feet and ran to her nephew, picking him up and sobbing into his shirt.

"You're alive," she said, smiling at him through tears. "Are you okay?"

"Auntie Ana, can we go home?" he asked. He didn't sound scared, but rather indifferent, as if this cavern filled with crap and floating bodies (which Ana had still failed to notice, being distracted by the presence of her nephew) bored him.

"Yeah, baby, we can go home," she said, then caught herself. She knew that probably wasn't going to be the case. She caught Pennywise's gaze after she said it; he was glaring at her, as if he were a perturbed child, jealous that Ronnie was getting her affection and

not him.

"What's next?" she asked, terrified of the answer, but she knew their future didn't hold splashing around in the sewers happily for the rest of their lives.

"Whatever do you mean, sweet girl?"

"You know what I mean," she said, trying to not be 'rude' again. "Why did you take him? There must be a reason for it." *Especially since you didn't eat him,* she thought darkly, and Pennywise giggled. He took a few steps towards them, and Ana pulled the boy closer to her as if it would protect him from the child eater.

"I took him to get your attention," he said, giggling. She stared at him in utter confusion.

"Well, you've got it," she admitted, her heart starting to beat wildly in her chest. "And now that you have my attention...?"

"Pennywise wants to make a deal," he said, all traces of a smile now gone from his painted face. He just stared at her silently.

"Okay," she replied quietly, knowing that this wasn't going to end in her favor. "What is it?"

"I, Eater of Worlds, will bring this child back to the arms of his loving parents," he started, taking another few steps towards her; she couldn't help but take a few steps back, as his smile-less face was look more and more menacing by the second. "And leave he and sweet little Heather alone for the rest of their natural lives, so long as you are mine."

She had literally backed herself into a wall, startling when she hit it. His face was dangerously close to hers now, and she pressed the little boy's face into her shoulder, willing him not to look at the clown's ominous stare.

"Wh-what does that mean?" she whispered, horrified at the proposition.

"That means, sweet girl, that you will stay here with me."

"For how long?" she asked, knowing that this wasn't going to come with and expiration date.

"As long as I say so," he growled. "What do you say?"

She knew she had no choice in the matter. If she said no, he'd probably eat the kids and keep her down there anyway. Why was he even offering her a deal? She was glad he didn't feel the need to answer her thoughts this time.

"Yes," she whispered, and his ruby red lips cracked into that unnerving smile again.

"Then we have a deal!" he joyfully clapped his gloved hands together. Without warning, he started to rip Ronnie from Ana's arms.

"Wait!" she yelled, and he started to stomp away with the boy, who started yelling for his aunt.

"No waiting, sweet girl, I have places to be and people to see!" he said merrily, and she started tugging on his costumed arm.

"Please, *please* let me say goodbye!" she pleaded helplessly. He looked down at her face for a second, and she actually heard him sigh in annoyance. Nonetheless, he let Ana take the boy into her arms, and she repeated the same sentiments she told Heather back at the house, which seemed like forever ago. After she kissed the top of his head, she asked, "How can I trust that you're taking him home?"

Pennywise took the boy roughly in his arms again, and this time Ana didn't protest. "I guess you can't!" he said cruelly, and disappeared up the well. All of a sudden, Ana was alone in the giant cavern of the sewers, sobbing as she tried to comprehend what she had gotten herself into.

After an unknown amount of time being alone, she looked up, hoping to see the sky. She screamed so loud when she saw all the floating bodies, Pennywise could hear her clearly down the street.

8. Chapter 8

A search for a comfortable spot to hunker down and wait was currently underway as Ana gingerly stepped around the cavern, afraid she was going to impale her feet on a random sharp object or find a floating body part. There was sewer water everywhere, which had soaked her socks and shoes long ago. Her clothing didn't fair much better, having gotten wet after Pennywise had dropped her on the ground earlier, and was taking its sweet time attempting to dry and offer her a bit of warmth. She couldn't stop shivering, and she wasn't sure if it was from the frigid air or from her constant and pressing fear. She felt like a vulnerable bundle of exposed nerves, even the sound of water dripping slowly somewhere in the vicinity making here nearly jump out of her skin.

What she was waiting for, Ana wasn't sure in the least. She assumed at some point that the Eater of Worlds would return to her; after all, what was the point of coercing her into being his prisoner if he wasn't going to do anything with her? The continuing realization that she was in his domain and had little hope of ever leaving revolted her, a new wave of dread flooding her senses. She knew that this was the reality she was in, and she would never be able to forget what had just taken place, but it was like a bad dream and her consciousness had to keep reprocessing everything. She was reliving the fact that she had agreed to this "deal" over and over, every few seconds. She wondered if she would be able to keep her sanity in this place, thinking she was about to snap at any second now, and Pennywise wasn't even there to contribute to the descent into madness. How could she possibly handle it when he was there again, laughing constantly and piercing through her with those glowing eyes? Deep in her thoughts, she absentmindedly reached up to her neck where Robert had bitten her when she was in the hospital. It made her wince, but not because it hurt; It reminded her of his strange obsession with her scent and his constant need to be up close and personal when they were in each other's presence. She attempted to ignore the nagging feeling that his drive to keep her with him might be sexual; the idea of it was so atrocious that she hated herself for even letting it cross her thoughts.

There seemed to be a large cargo box or train car that was at the base of the pile, but the entrance was sealed shut when Ana finally chose to investigate it. At first she didn't want to go near it, knowing that there couldn't possibly anything pleasant in there, but knowing that all of those floating cadavers were only tens of feet above her pushed her to at least try the door. When that didn't work, she was left with no choice but to sit on a tattered, soaked couch cushion she was able to pull from the rubble.

"Don't look," she whispered to herself, as the instinct to look up at the bodies bubbled up again. She bowed her head down and closed her eyes, repeating over and over, "Don't look, don't look, don't look." Then, she had a thought that distracted her from the persistent need to glance at the floaters: Ronnie.

Thinking of her red-haired nephew both calmed and aggravated her. She had no reassurance whatsoever that he was alright. For all she knew, Pennywise had taken him up to the house and killed him, and here she would be stuck either way. But there was a small part of her, extremely naive maybe, that felt that the clown had returned him as he had said he would. Once she was able to grasp onto that, her terror lessened a bit, and she was able to control some of her shivering.

So long as you are mine. Pennywise's words echoed in her mind, starting the process all over again.

Hours passed, or at least that's what Ana assumed as she sat there in her dungeon. She had no food, no clean water, no warm clothing. She found herself needing to relieve her bladder, and found it comical that she tried to find the best place to squat and pee, like it mattered in this shit hole. Only when she was done and pulling her pants back up did she find the act disrespectful, like she was desecrating a cemetery.

Then she felt it, finally. He was coming back.

Expecting to hear him walking in the water towards her as he approached, she startled and caught herself from falling backward into the water when she suddenly heard a "Hello!" in front of her. Her eyes slowly traveled from his enormous shoes, up his silk costume,

and finally fell on his devilish red grin.

It didn't cross her mind that proper social etiquette was expected here, so her first instinct wasn't to reply to his greeting. Miffed, he reached down and grasped her upper arms, yanking her to her feet.

"Can't you hear me, sweet girl?" he growled dangerously, looking down on her face with golden eyes. Ana didn't meet his gaze, her eyes still fixed on his mouth, as he had blood covering his chin and dripping onto his frilled collar.

"D-did you...what did you..." she managed to sputter, and she watched as some of the blood sprayed at her as he laughed savagely.

"What is that, Ana? I can't understand you!" he replied shrilly, his hands still holding her with a forceful grip, but the pain was the last thing on her mind right now. She loathed him for asking her to clarify her question, aware that he knew what she was inquiring.

"Ronnie?" she was able to whisper. "Did you - ?"

"No, no, of course not!" he replied, "Do you have no faith in me, Ana?"

She chose not to answer that. "So he's back at home? And my family is safe?"

"Snug as a bug in a rug!" he sang. "Everyone's healthy and happy."

"Where did you leave him? Are you sure someone found him?" She knew he probably wasn't in the mood to play twenty questions, but she couldn't help herself.

"Someone found him. He kept insisting you were trapped somewhere, but for some reason his mom and dad think you decided to head back to college a little bit early," he replied, and she stared at him in shock for a few seconds.

She was about to ask him another question, something along the lines of 'How could you?!', but apparently her mind was still capable of logical reasoning even after all of the time waiting. Pennywise must have been gleefully anticipating some sort of dramatic reaction from

her, and when she stayed silent and still kept her eyes focused on his mouth, he started to glare.

"Look at me," he demanded, saliva flying from his bloodied lips. She was starting to withdraw into her thoughts again, now distressed by the fact that he had taken away all concern about her whereabouts away from the ones that she loved, with no effort at all. Lost in her revelation yet again that she was probably never going to see them again, she didn't hear him.

He let out a low growl in frustration at her silence and lack of cooperation, and suddenly lifted her into his arms just as he had when he brought her down to his lair. It bolted her out of her fugue state.

"What are you doing?" she asked, still having to remind herself not to look up so she wouldn't see his leftovers in the air, instead intently looking at the red pom-poms on his chest. It really aggravated her that he insisted on carrying her everywhere as of late, but quickly decided that it was better than his tendency to lift her in the air by the throat.

"Going up," he replied gruffly, and they started to ascend up the well. She didn't protest when he continued to carry her through the basement and up the stairs. They continued through the main level of the house and up another set of stairs, and they entered what appeared to be a bedroom. There was a queen sized bed with a shabby wooden headboard, the linens appearing to be stained with old age and covered in dust.

Ana eyed it apprehensively. What he was bringing her into a bedroom for she didn't know, and she didn't think she could mentally handle any unwanted advances at the moment.

He set her down, allowing her to plant her feet on the ground before releasing his hold on her, so unlike last time when she ended up lying in sewer water. She backed away slowly, taking the surroundings of the rest of the room. There was an old dresser, some chunks missing out of the wood and a few of the brass handles missing off the drawers. A full-length mirror covered in grime sat next to it. When she caught her reflection in it, she barely recognized herself with her

tangled mess of dark brown hair strewn about her shoulders. Her skin was exceptionally more pale than usually, and even through all of the dust on the mirror, she could see that her eyes were swollen from crying and she needed to sleep.

A gloved hand reached out slowly towards her, and she closed her eyes in anticipation as it ran a few fingers through her tangled hair. She expected him to step closer to her, smell her, possibly bite her again, but none of it came.

"Sleep," he stated curtly. It caught her off guard and she opened her eyes and finally looked into his golden gaze. The expression on his painted face was almost contemplative.

"Really?" she asked weakly, the idea of it almost alien now.

"Yes, and you need food," he responded, almost as though he was finally realizing that his prisoner needed nourishment. "Pennywise will bring you some."

The mention of a meal made her finally pay attention to the gnawing hunger in her stomach. She had no idea what day or time it was, but she knew she was ready for a full belly and a nap, assuming her racing mind would let her sleep.

"Ok," she replied, not knowing what else to say to him. *Just not any kid meat,* she thought cynically. Pennywise laughed, the noise bouncing about the room.

"It's not funny," she scoffed, but in a way it kind of was, just in the ridiculousness of it all. He continued to giggle even after she crossed her arms across her chest in disapproval, but then he suddenly stopped, his large head snapping quickly towards the bedroom door. Just as she started to wonder what he was reacting to, she heard the front door open and voices coming from downstairs.

"Oops, gotta run!" he said cheerfully. "My *friends* are here! You stay right here, sweet girl," he said, and was out the door in a few strides. Ana's mind immediately went to Mike. She rushed towards the door after Pennywise, intent on pleading with Mike and his friends to just get the hell out of there and try to get to safety before they were

killed. Just as she reached the threshold, the door suddenly morphed into a solid brick wall. She pounded desperately against the barrier, screaming obscenities; when the door failed to magically reappear, she turned to try one of the windows. Both were now replaced by red brick as well. She was trapped.

"God damnit!" she screamed, and then finally conceded to her exhaustion and slid down to the floor next to the dresser. Her head in her hands, she started to cry once again, her tears bringing her tired and malnourished body closer to a dangerous level of dehydration.

She heard multiple people screaming in the other areas of the house. It was intermittent, but frequent, and she heard them calling out to one another by name. She wondered how many of Mike's friends were there with him, what Pennywise was doing to them, how many of them he would kill.

It seemed to go on forever. She briefly considered calling out to them, to yell for help, but she knew it would be fruitless. Even if Mike knew she was there, they wouldn't be able to reach each other, and if he spent the time trying to get to her it might only get him killed faster. Ana was coming to the realization that Pennywise had possessive tendencies, and no doubt he saw her as one of his possessions.

Then, the screaming stopped. She wondered if the Losers had a chance to try to perform the ritual, something that Mike had put so much hope into and now Ana was failing him miserably by not being there.

Her mind went to the dream with the 'monk', and the experience she had in front of this house the night before she met with Mike. Having been so preoccupied with the horrible things that had been happening since Ronnie was taken, she forgot that she had failed at triggering any memories about Derry from her childhood. And now that she was finally in Neibolt house, she had no clue what she was supposed to do, which was not at all what she had been told by...whoever it was.

She finally gave into her fatigue and decided to crawl onto the bed, not caring that she still had dirty clothes and shoes on. No use in worrying now; either Mike was going to win, and she would probably

be stuck in this room forever since no one knew she was behind this brick wall, or Pennywise would kill them all, and he'd come back to torment her.

Her head had no more than hit the pillow when she startled from a loud roar. It was muffled, like it was far away, yet still within the vicinity of the house. Somehow she knew it was Pennywise, and she didn't dare try to picture what monster form he was taking to make that kind of an angry, primitive sound. She heard the roaring again, interspersed with booming, demonic laughter. The sounds were growing louder and at times the house would shake around her, as if the caverns and the house were one entity.

A renewed wave of dread hit her, thinking of what was happening to the people down there trying to stop him as she laid on this bed, a useless lump of nothing. She sat up when she heard another round of Pennywise's amplified laughter, unwilling to try to rest any longer. She screamed when she was suddenly staring at a cloaked figure standing in the room with her.

9. Chapter 9

"How did you get in here?" Ana sputtered, hurriedly getting off the bed to stand. She glanced at where the door had been, and it was still a brick wall. The places where the windows had been looked the same. Seeing the figure from her dreams mere feet from her was unsettling, but a feeling of hope rose up in her like the first ray of sunshine breaking through dark, gray clouds.

"I am not here," the woman's voice replied, "Only an apparition."

Ana stepped forward to test if this woman's statement was true. She went to place a hand on the burgundy cloak, and it went through her like she was a ghost. She quickly returned her arm to her side.

"Okay, then," she said, trying to look at her closer. "So can you get me out of here?"

"That's not why I'm here." Her voice was soothing, like a mother trying to calm a small child. Ana studied her closer, her face still hidden by her hood.

"Okay. Talk," she said curtly, her patience nonexistent at this point. As they spoke, the thunderous noise from the ground below continued.

"I have come to tell you, that no matter what takes place today, that you must remain here."

Ana stared into the the hood of the cloak where a face should be, her mix of emotions making it hard to settle on an adequate response. She burst out laughing, going to sit on the edge of the bed again. "Well, I don't think that's going to be a problem!" she exclaimed, gesturing at the walls surrounding her. "Do you have any other words of wisdom to bestow?"

Unable to see the woman's face, she couldn't tell if she was making her angry or not. At this point, she didn't care.

"We need you to take this seriously."

"Take *what* seriously?" Ana hissed at her, the frustration in her killing the laughter instantly. "I keep getting these...messages, and I know absolutely *nothing*! So you say I have some purpose, some reason for being here. How exactly am I supposed to follow through with anything? And what the hell makes me so special? I can't even threaten not to do anything, because I don't know what it is I'm supposed to be doing!"

The cloaked figure was silent for a few moments, obviously taken aback by Ana's outburst. "You need to have faith in those who bound you," she said mysteriously.

"Get the fuck out!" Ana responded furiously. "If you can't tell me anything, then I have no reason to keep talking to you."

The figure was silent again. A roar from Pennywise made the house shake around them, some of the dust from the walls starting to pollute the air. Then, the woman's head turned sideways, as if listening to someone speak, and sighed.

"I will give you answers," she said finally. "But we don't have much time."

"We have all the time in the world," Ana rebuked, and then folded her arms across her chest.

"I am of the Brethren of Maturin," the woman started. "We devote our existence to the Great Turtle."

"Who?" Ana asked, raising and eyebrow.

"You really don't remember anything," the woman said quietly, then continued. "Maturin. One of the Guardians of the Beams, the creator of our universes. Our mission is to destroy the Eater of Worlds, and that's why we bound you to Earth."

"What does that mean, you *bound* me?" Ana asked, the rage inside her subsiding, finally getting answers. Not very clear ones, but at least she was getting somewhere.

"You aren't of this dimension. The Brethren sacrificed much and failed many times before we were able to bring you here

successfully."

Ana was at a loss for words. "What do you mean, I'm not from this dimension? How is that possible?"

"We needed one being from your race here, where It resides, in order to weaken him. It is the only chance we have of destroying him completely. It took great power from our leader to complete the process, and he has suffered greatly."

"If this is true," Ana started slowly, not sure what to ask next, as a thousand questions were forming in her mind, "why can't I remember anything?"

"That's not something we anticipated when we started the binding ritual. You were to come here, go to It, confront It. Once we were able to make you human and put you in Derry, you lost all memory of your former life and your purpose. Our leader was able to introduce false memories into your mind and those around you, particularly bonding you with the family you were living with, so you wouldn't try to leave Derry. We needed to keep you close to It until we were able to get you to where you needed to be."

Ana's mind was racing, attempting to process this bombardment of information. The house shook violently again, rumbling laughter following after.

Pennywise's obsession with her, and his insistence that she wasn't human, was starting to make sense. The realization made her want to vomit.

"Who am I?" she asked, her voice shaking as she spoke. "What am I?"

"There's no time," the woman replied. Ana, anticipating the woman to disappear without a trace and leave her, started to protest, but the woman suddenly stepped forward and pushed her ghost of a hand through Ana's forehead. A shock went through her entire body like she had been struck by a bolt of lightning, and suddenly she had the sensation that she was weightless, her body surrounded by nothing but darkness. Even though she had no idea where she was or what was happening, all the negative feelings she had been experiencing

during this conversation were gone, replaced by a warm, mellow sensation. She wanted to stay there forever.

Images started to take shape in front of her, like she was surrounded by an enormous projector screen. At first all she could make sense of was a blinding white light, and she attempted to shield her eyes from it to no avail. Then, she started to see the silhouettes of human-like figures bustling about a grassy terrain, like they were all trying to get somewhere important. Their gates were incredibly graceful, almost like they were floating along the ground as they walked. Slowly, details started to take shape in the figures, and their appearance took her breath away. They looked similar to people, but had shiny, glowing skin of all shades. Long, flowing hair of all possible bright colors grew from their heads, and their eyes were large and childlike. All of them wore some variation of white flowing cloaks, some with wreaths of beautiful unknown flowers adorning their heads. Some were chattering to each other as they walked, smiles on their faces, and Ana couldn't help but smile, too.

Her eyes fell on one of the beings, one with bright blue hair and sparkling eyes that matched, and somehow she instinctively knew that was her real self. She was talking to two others, their speech audible but she was unable to recognize what they were saying. For a while, she felt at peace, just watching herself as she moved along with the friends she was with. As they walked, Ana could see the group was approaching some sort of large temple built out of golden, sparkling stone. They started to climb the steps, no change in their happy expressions as they approached the top, and then went through a large archway that was covered in little white flowers.

As Ana watched them cross the threshold and enter the temple, her feeling of contentment started to give way to a familiar feeling of dread. She found herself wanting to call out to them, to warn them that something ominous was among them, but she was merely a bystander as this scene played out. The trio had entered into a large open room with vaulted ceilings, large carvings of animals made out of white stone lining the walls. Some looked similar to what Ana recognized from Earth, and some looked completely alien. The group took their time looking at the carvings, as if they were tourists enjoying an art museum.

Ana spotted a carving of a large turtle. Seeing it made the panic inside her swell, although the reason was completely unknown to her. She ripped her eyes away from the carving, frantically searching for her blue-haired former self, and saw to her horror that she was approaching it with a look of awe on her face.

No! she wanted to scream, to warn her. But she was merely watching, unable to affect what had already taken place. She saw herself stand in front of the statue of Maturin, and then the look of awe on her pristine, glowing face changed to fear. The floor below had lost its solidity, and was churning up a twisting, black circle of appendages that started to surround and claw at her body. She screamed in unison with her former self, terrified for her even though she knew where she was going to end up. Then suddenly, the spot where she had been standing in front of the turtle was empty, the floor seemingly untouched. The two others she had been with seemed not to have noticed what had just happened, as they kept slowly moving about the room.

The image shifted. Ana was back to floating in nothingness, until glowing lights started to approach from a distance. As they appeared to grow closer, they started to shift, spinning around each other, then take form. It was a figure covered in a dark red cloak, seeming to float in front of her. When it started to speak to her, Ana knew instantly that it wasn't the woman that she had been conversing with earlier.

"You must stay where It resides. In time, your power will become apparent to you," it said in a deep, commanding voice. "It is crucial to destroying the Eater of Worlds, the one that terrorizes and eats the humans of our dimension."

"It's not my dimension," Ana started to argue, but she was swiftly cut off.

"It is now," he said. She assumed that this was the leader that the woman had spoke of, his power seeming to pulsate from his form like heat from a volcano.

"What about the ritual? The one that Mike is trying to do now?" Ana asked.

"It will fail," the voice replied. "It is a heroic attempt, but it will not work." Ana's heart sank, knowing that Mike was probably going to die.

"What am I supposed to do?" She was coming to terms with everything, grateful that she was learning the truth about everything, and she pressed on with her questions.

"In time," he repeated.

Ana scoffed at his inscrutable answer. "You're showing me this much, why not tell me so I'm prepared?"

"You are foolish and ungracious, Ana. Nothing like you were before," he seethed, his the demeanor in his voice dripping malice now. "Humanity does not suit you well." The sudden change in his delivery and evident defensiveness reminded Ana of a certain clown's ego, but she knew it wasn't him.

She was shocked at his statements, anger taking over her very core. "Then why did you do this to me? It didn't seem like I was super agreeable to being *bound*, more like I was kidnapped."

"You cried out for purpose. I gave it to you," he replied viciously. She was about to respond, possibly with a few choice curse words, when he thrust his arm forward and it felt as though she was being pushed out of the dark void. She suddenly found herself in the disgusting bedroom again, although she was lying on the floor rather than the bed. She jumped to her feet, and then strained her ears to listen.

Silence. No laughter, no screams, no bellows of a roaring monster. The brick wall that had taken the place of the door was still in place. The cloaked woman was nowhere to be seen, and Ana was grateful for the solitude, having had enough of the brethren, or monks or whatever they were for the time being.

The stillness lasted for a only a few minutes, as the house began to shake again, this time unrelenting and making the furniture around her started to bounce off the floor. Then, the walls started to crack and crumble around her.

"Stay here, they say," she muttered to herself darkly, finding it ironic that she had been repeatedly told to stay in this house that was no falling down.

The brick on the outside walls started to swirl and change back to the windows they once were, and Ana knew she had to get out or go down with the building. She threw open the window forcefully and stuck one leg out, taking a few seconds to contemplate how high up she was. As she looked back into the bedroom and saw that it had started to fold in on itself, she swung her other leg out and then jumped.

She fell to the ground ungracefully, feeling a snap and a sharp stab as her ankle cracked beneath her. She didn't have time to react to the pain, as the house was appearing to be sucked down into the ground as it collapsed. She forced herself to her feet and limped away as fast she could towards the street.

She heard yelling as she rounded the house, and then a voice called out to her.

"Ana!" Mike cried, rushing forward to help her stand on her good leg. "What are you doing here?" She saw his friends huddled together on the street, watching in exhilaration as the house disappeared. One of them, a man with black-rimmed glasses, was crying out for someone named Eddie, the others keeping him from trying to rush back to the doomed building.

"I was inside," she croaked, grateful for his solid form to help hold her up. "I was trapped in a room. I could hear you guys, but there was nothing I could do."

"It doesn't matter," he said, rubbing her shoulder reassuringly. "It's over. It's dead."

"What?" Ana asked in disbelief.

"It's dead. It's gone. We won," he repeated, although he didn't sound like it believed it himself.

"Oh my god," Ana whispered quietly. Had the monk leader been

wrong? He had said they would fail, and yet here a group of them stood, alive and well, and Neibolt house was gone. *There's no reason to think that he knew everything just because he pulled me from my universe, forced me into a human body and was able to communicate with me psychically*, she thought sarcastically. A poor attempt to convince herself that he had been wrong.

Even so, when the lot appeared to be void of a creepy old house and the dust had settled, Ana agreed to go with the group to their hotel. If Pennywise was alive, he wasn't making it apparent to her, and she didn't feel like standing in the middle of the street to see if he showed up. She and Mike walked slowly behind the group as he helped her to limp along. They didn't speak much, as it would be too much effort in their state of exhaustion.

They reached the hotel and went inside, standing in a circle in the lobby.

"Did you find a stray?" Richie asked, pointing to Ana. "Didn't know we had a new girl." His quip earned a few tired laughs from the group.

"This is Ana," Mike explained. "She was the one I told you guys about, was going to help us with the ritual, but..."

"It took her nephew," Beverly finished, giving her a mournful look. Apparently Mike had told them about her leaving his apartment abruptly, no doubt hearing about Ronnie's disappearance from other people in town.

"I'm so sorry," Bill said, grasping her hand in his.

"No, it's okay," Ana said quickly, not wanting to upset them further after everything they had just gone through. "He's alive."

"H-he is?" Bill asked in surprise. "We thought It took him."

Ana started to grow nervous, she was like caught in a lie. "He - It did. But Ronnie's back home now, he's fine."

They all stared at her in wonder. She started to grow fearful that somehow they would know about the deal she made, that she had

sold her freedom to the monster that terrorized them and killed their friend. It made her feel like she was betraying them somehow.

Before she could further contemplate what else to say, she felt it.

She knew the leader of the Brethren of Maturin had to be right. The Losers thought they had killed It, but they hadn't. He was alive, and he was coming.

"Listen, I'm sorry to leave so suddenly, but now that we're talking about my family, I need to go check on them. You know, piece of mind," she said quickly, and started to move towards the door. None of them followed her right away, and she was alone for a few moments as she stood on the sidewalk, looking for a sign that Pennywise was near. She prayed that he would just leave the others alone.

She jumped when Mike put a hand on her shoulder; apparently she hadn't heard him walk up behind her.

"You aren't going to try to walk there, are you?" he asked, concern in his voice. "I can drive you to their house."

"Oh, no, that's okay," she said. She saw Mike look past her at something, and she turned around to see a little boy standing there. He had red hair, and for a second she thought it was Ronnie somehow.

"Auntie Ana?" the strange boy asked, and Ana knew it was Pennywise. "What are you doing?" She saw his eyes travel to her torso, where MIke had wrapped his arm around her to help steady her.

"I'm just talking to this nice man," Ana said, trying to keep her voice steady. She pulled herself from Mike's grip and limped towards the small figure.

"Will you come home now?" The boy asked, blue eyes staring up at her.

"Yes, I'll come home right now," Ana said, and the boy reached out his hand towards her. She hesitated for a second before taking it.

"I can drive you," Mike offered again. It pained her to leave him like this, knowing that he was so sure he had succeeded, but that he was still in a lot of danger.

"No, we can manage," Ana said. Mike stepped towards her and pulled her into a hug. The boy kept a tight grip on Ana's hand as they shared their embrace. If Mike had looked more closely at the boy just then, he would have seen that his blue eyes had changed to gold, an angry red rimming them.

"Come on," she said to the boy as they turned away. She moved along as quickly as she could, wanting to get him away from Mike and his friends as quickly as possible, as if it would change anything if he decided to attack them. They rounded the corner, no longer in view of the hotel, and Ana felt the small hand in hers grow large, silk fingers now interlaced between hers.

She didn't glance at the towering figure that walked next to hers now. She didn't need to know who it was, what he looked like.

"Did you hurt yourself?" Pennywise asked, giggling lowly.

"Yeah, I had to throw myself out a window," she replied, rolling her eyes and wincing as she continued to limp along. "Where are we going?"

He scooped her up in his arms suddenly, and it gave him satisfaction that she was appreciative to not have to walk any longer.

"Home!" he piped giddily, a bounce in his long stride as he carried Ana down the street.

10. Chapter 10

Pennywise took them back to where Ana had watched Neibolt house disappear into the ground, and she was shocked to see that a house was standing there once again. It was similar in size and structure, but looked a bit newer and like someone had been actually been taking care of the place intermittently. It had sky blue siding with white trim and windows, although some of it looked like it had been gouged by passing hailstorms over time. The trees, now sprouting green leaves, looked healthy and thriving, although in need of some branch trimming. It was as if he had attempted to resurrect a newer, pleasant version of the house but didn't want everything quite perfect, like antique furniture people painted to give it a face-lift, but still scratched the new paint to give it a rustic, worn look.

They entered the front door, and it reminded Ana of a groom carrying his new bride across the threshold. She pushed the thought out of her mind immediately, expecting a giggle or crude remark from Pennywise, but he did neither. He actually appeared to be preoccupied with his own thoughts, which was something Ana hadn't seen in the shape shifter previously. Instead, he placed her on a couch in the somewhat clean sitting room, then stood there and watched her. She removed her shoe and sock and placed her injured limb on an ottoman to elevate it. It was swollen and angry-red.

"I don't supposed you have ice in that freezer?" she asked, looking over at the kitchen that looked as if it had appliances that were well-used, but functional.

"No," he replied.

"Ok," she said, gently rubbing her sore ankle. "Remember how earlier you mentioned getting me food?" The idea of asking this monster to go and find her nourishment seemed absolutely ridiculous, but at the moment she knew of no other way to get it.

"Pennywise will get it," he said, turning to head back out the front door. She was going to let him leave, but she couldn't help herself.

"Why didn't you kill all of them?" she asked.

"Is my sweet girl not pleased?" he mused, his usual demeanor back in full force. "Does she want me to go back and finish the job?"

"No!" she exclaimed, instantly regretting saying anything. "I was just curious. And surprised."

"Curiosity killed the cat!" he sang at her, and she sighed, internally criticizing her poor judgment for even bringing it up. He must have decided to humor her, because then he added, "I killed one of them. Then I decided, it was a lot more fun playing with them than it was killing them. Besides," he said, his golden, uneven eyes not blinking as he spoke, "I have something that is a bit more preoccupying right now."

She shuddered. "Are you sure you just weren't getting your ass kicked? Decided to play possum?"

At her words, he bent down, his face dangerously close to hers. He stared at her without responding for what seemed like minutes, his red lips drawn into a sneer. "No. Now they can leave, go about their lives and think they're safe, and come to play again in a few decades." Then, a smile crossed his lips. "Besides, if they all have children, I can have fun with them too! Wouldn't that teach them not to mess with me?"

She regretted asking him anything, horrified at the thought of Pennywise going after all their kids someday.

He left the house then, leaving her alone in the big, refurbished house. Her thirst outweighing her pain, she got up from the couch and hopped over to the kitchen sink. To her astonishment, clean water poured from the faucet when she tried it, and she drank her fill greedily. After her thirst was quenched, she checked the refrigerator just in case he had stocked it for her already, but it was empty. Yet, it was cold, confirming that he house even had electricity currently.

Next she moved down the hall to the bathroom, desperate to get cleaned up. There was a single bar of soap resting on the sink, and she found a set of sweatpants and a plain t-shirt folded neatly on top of the closed toilet seat. She took the quickest shower of her life, hoping she would finish before he got back. The thought crossed her

mind that he had salvaged the clothing and towels she used from the pile of crap from the sewers. It made her feel selfish and dirty.

She slowly wandered the rest of the main level of the house. It was all furnished and livable, complete with a small library and study. Going against what her gut was telling her not to do, she decided to go part way down the staircase that led to the basement and peaked down. It was unfinished, and an open well stood in the exact same spot as before. Its presence confirmed what she already assumed: his sewer dungeon was still below them, floating bodies and all.

She turned to hurry back up the steps when she heard the front door open and footsteps come inside. Her injury slowed her greatly, however, and as she hopped up the last step, Robert stepped into her view, pizza box in hand.

The image of Pennywise the Dancing Clown going into a cafe in downtown Derry to stand in line and order take out was so peculiar, it was comical. Ana couldn't help but let out a small 'Ha!' and then bit her lip to keep from laughing out loud. Of course, she knew it was likely he had ordered her food in the form of Robert, but she still couldn't shake the image.

"Honey, I'm home!" Robert said with a smile, brandishing the box at her. The smell that wafted to her was so good, her mouth began to water. He seemed to be interested in a smell other than the pizza.

"You bathed," he said, looking her up and down. She felt heat rise to her cheeks, remembering that she hadn't had a clean pair of underwear or a bra to put on after her shower.

"Yeah," she said, following him into the kitchen. "I decided to scrub off the nice layer of sewer water and sweat I've been accumulating since lord knows how long."

"I hadn't noticed," he mused, setting the pizza on the counter. She stood across from him, turning the pizza box towards herself so she could open it and take a slice. That first bite was heavenly.

Like earlier, he merely stood there and watched. She could feel Robert's eyes on her, swearing they were burning holes into her flesh

like lasers.

"Can you stop that?" she said, after demolishing the slice of pizza.

"Stop what?"

"Staring at me."

In response to her request, he stepped around the counter, coming to stand right behind her. Without hesitation, he lifted the hair off her neck so he could nuzzle his face there, letting out a hum of appreciation. He pressed his lower body into her backside, pinning her against the counter.

"There. Now I'm not staring at you," he drawled quietly, his fingers dragging lazily up and down her arm.

Her hunger disappeared, instantly replaced by the sensation of her stomach rolling over like crazy, and she shut the pizza box and pushed it away.

"Don't let me distract you," he continued, and he shifted his hips slightly, pressing her body into the counter even harder. "I know I don't enjoy being interrupted during a meal."

"Oh, God," she groaned, the mental image of him consuming one of his meals flooding her brain. "Get off me."

"What?" he said, legitimately sounding surprised at her obvious disgust. She shoved herself backwards, just enough to shuffle to the side and get herself out from between Robert's hips and the counter.

"Stop it," she said quietly. "Stop acting like you don't know what I'm thinking. It's exhausting." He stared at her with those big blue eyes, his face so beautiful it was almost painful to look at. She found herself instantly being pulled in as soon as she caught his gaze.

"I'm not always delving into your mind, you know," he countered. "Sometimes I have more important things to occupy my time with."

"Oh, really?" she challenged, starting to feel the aggression in her grow. Robert was far less terrifying than Pennywise, and she felt her

hatred coming to the surface of her very being. "Too busy thinking about killing Eddie? Or were you replaying the last the time you killed and ate a kid?"

Had she been talking to a person, she might have hit a nerve, reached something deep within his conscience. Instead, he laughed, evidence that Pennywise was never gone no matter what he looked like. "You should have seen them. So convinced that they were actually hurting me, it was hilarious! Stupid, naive little humans!"

Not wanting to hear any of it, Ana hobbled out of the kitchen and into the sitting room, plopping herself onto the couch and elevating her leg on the ottoman again. Robert followed her, sitting on the couch next to her and an arm going around her shoulders.

"So what is it that little Ana wants me to see, hmm?" he teased, leaning into her, a smile plastered on his face.

"Stop it," she hissed angrily. He leaned over, drawing in a long whiff of her scent again.

"Maybe she wants me to see how much she likes it when I touch her?" he continued, his voice starting to resemble Pennywise's playful inflections with every word. He pushed his face into the nape of her neck again, this time lightly kissing it instead of delivering a painful bite. The feeling of his lips against her skin made her shudder, and she closed her eyes tightly, trying to focus on the pain in her ankle instead of what he was doing.

"Now, now, don't be like that," he purred, tightly gripping her arms and swinging her onto the couch so that she was lying on her back, moving her as though she weighed nothing. He nestled his body on top of hers, his knees resting on the couch between her legs, careful not to touch her injured ankle. The sentiment of his carefulness not to cause her further pain was lost on her, as she was petrified with fear.

"Look at me," he commanded quietly, and Ana hadn't even realized that she was still squeezing her eyes shut. She found herself obeying him, and opened her eyes, greeted with the sight of his extremely handsome features looking down at her. Like the night at the hospital, she started to feel like she was being pulled into some sort

of trance as his blue eyes stared into hers. When she calmed down a bit, he bowed his head to kiss her lightly. She felt a tingle run through her body as he pressed his lips into hers, and he started to kiss her with much more fervor. His tongue ran along her bottom lip, demanding entry into her mouth. She eventually parted her lips slightly, and his tongue wrapped around hers passionately, sending shivers from her mouth all the way down to her groin.

His mouth moved from her lips to the nape of her neck, and she gasped with astonished pleasure as he began to suck there, one hand starting to snake up the the t-shirt she had just put on. Spurred on by her reaction, he started to bite down lightly on her neck.

"Wait," she protested breathlessly, afraid that he was going to make her bleed again, trying to squirm away from him.

"It's alright," he purred lowly, moving to press a knee lightly between her legs, the pressure enough to make her moan lightly. She was about to lose herself completely in the moment, give into whatever this was leading up to, when Robert stopped his advances, his face pulling away from her abruptly.

She looked at him in surprise, trying to catch her breath. He was suddenly staring at her with a look of utter bewilderment, making her feel increasingly uneasy. Then she watched as his expressions went from confusion, to brooding, to utter and delightful amusement.

He pushed himself off her and rolled onto the floor, clutching his stomach as he was completely consumed by laughter. He cackled, writhing on the floor for minutes, appearing to be stuck in some sort of fit, and Ana had sat up and scooted herself into the couch corner furthest away from him. She was absolutely terrified at his sudden and extreme outburst.

"You!" he belted finally, struggling to get the words out, "You *aren't* human, Pennywise *knew it!*"

As he mentioned Pennywise's name, Robert suddenly transformed from the devastatingly handsome young man into the demon clown, still rolling on the floor.

Ana, now curled into a defensive ball, watched him as he crawled to his knees, the laughter making it difficult to move apparently, and then stood up to his full height. He suddenly lurched forward, bending down and grabbing Ana's forearms and pulling them away from her body, so he could get as close to her as he could.

"Someone had a little visit while Pennywise was busy with his friends, huh?" he nearly shouted. "Funny that you failed to mention it!"

"You didn't ask," she bantered sarcastically, only encouraging the loud chortling.

"And you think - *you think* - " he continued, as if this was the funniest situation in the world, "that you have some *power,* some magical force inside you that can defeat Pennywise!"

She hadn't fully believed that was the truth before, even though the brethren had told her that was so, but now that he was throwing it in her face cruelly, Ana wanted to knee him in his costumed groin for being this monumentally condescending. As she glared at him angrily, his laughter finally started to die down.

"Oh, you think that maybe it's true, do you?" he growled lowly. "You think that somehow, someday your *power* will be fully realized, and then you will help these stupid humans destroy me?" She said nothing, knowing his ego was starting to be threatened, and she didn't dare make it any worse.

"I know all about your little universe, sat a top Maturin's with this one," he said, "And I know all about what you are. The only *power* that you possess, sweet girl, is in your death!"

Her glare wavered at that statement. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, that your little race of angelic, chaste, pathetic fairies only has one thing that can weaken me," he continued, a mirthful giggle escaping his lips, "and that's if I kill and then eat you!"

"Screw you," she breathed, but she had little she argue at this point.

"Awe, don't be upset, little Ana," he mocked, making a sad face at

her, "You didn't know any better!"

She wanted to protest, to demand that it wasn't true, but the realization came crashing around her; that was why the monks were so stingy with information from the very beginning, and why they were so mysterious even when they were telling her the 'truth'. Who would willingly be pulled from their home just so they could go to another existence to find an evil monster and let it devour her? It was unthinkable.

Trying to process the truth, Ana barely noticed Pennywise in the room anymore. She was caught completely off guard when he planted a long, hard smooch on the lips, then left to go down to his dungeon to do lord knows what. She wiped her mouth on her arm in disgust when he was out of the room, red lipstick smeared on her pale skin like blood.

11. Chapter 11

Pennywise was gone for the next several hours. Ana assumed that he had left her to go hunt for his next meal, and she could sense him nearby, the familiar feeling a mere murmur of what in normally was. It was like a consistent, gentle buzzing in her chest rather than the incandescent awareness she was used to. She wondered if the meant he was below her in the sewers.

In her solace, she was attempting to grasp four truths, her mind racing in never-ending, chaotic circles. The first was, her family was not her family. This was probably the most painful one. She couldn't picture her life without Cassandra, who had been her rock throughout her 'childhood' after all of the loss and torment. And the idea that the children that Ana loved so dearly were nothing but strangers to her was nothing short of heart wrenching, earth shattering. Knowing that their minds had also been manipulated into believing they loved her made her feel invasive and perverse, like she was a lowly parasite. Of course, her consciousness kept recalling the fact that she had traded Ronnie and Heather's safety for her freedom, and when she felt even the smallest inkling of regret for the arrangement, she felt even worse.

Her second truth: what she could remember about her life was not real, and what she *couldn't* remember was. She kept replaying the images of her home dimension in her mind, unable to shake the overwhelming feeling of peace that had ran through her as she watched herself. Up until she saw herself being ripped away from the temple in a swirl of darkness, she had felt content and happy, a rare event as of late; it was so foreign to her now that it was agonizing.

Third, the Brethren of Maturin had tried to manipulate her into walking right into Pennywise's grasp just so she could be eaten. When her mind was grappling with this certainty, the hatred that ran through her was so profound, it was only lessened when she could picture their gruesome, bloody deaths. Sometimes it was by Pennywise's hands, and sometimes it was by her own, although her weapon of choice changed every time she pictured it. Had she been her usual self, her imagination would have horrified her. At one

point, she pictured sitting in Dr. Ling's office, calmly discussing everything with the sadistic therapist. Her imaginary therapy session ended with him a screaming puddle on the floor, the rotting Asian woman wheezing in his face. The deafening silence in the house was briefly interrupted by her laughter.

Lastly, Pennywise was aware of the Brethren's desire to cripple his strength, and he seemed absolutely delighted with the whole thing. Ana had to admit, the monster had confidence that couldn't be shaken. She almost found herself admiring the trait, which appalled her even more. She assumed that in her natural form, picturing the violent deaths of a group of people while experiencing admiration for the Eater of the Worlds was probably not even a possibility. She and all of the creatures in her world had looked so pure, so virtuous. Ana wasn't sure if the new found humanity was giving rise to this hatred, or if it was all of the things that had been done to her. Nature versus nurture.

In the time when Pennywise was absent, Ana had mainly stayed on the couch in the sitting room, although a few times she moved around the house on her injured leg, unable to sit still any longer. When she felt the 'crazy tingle' suddenly increase, she had been hopping into the study to see if the shelves had any books on them. So many previous times, the sensation sent her into a frenzied panic. This time, she acted as though nothing was amiss, the knowledge that from now on she would always have to anticipate his presence giving her a strange sense of calm. Some of the shelves did indeed have books. Glancing at the spines, she saw that there was a random assortment of them, a mix of novels and encyclopedias along with school textbooks and How-To for Dummies.

Ana could sense that he was standing in the doorway, but she kept looking through the titles, a naive part of her hoping that if she ignored him, he'd grow bored and go away.

"The turtle is dead," came his gravelly voice, Ana's plan being ruined instantly. She sighed, putting the tattered diary she had pulled out from its spot back into its place, and then turning to sit on a wooden chair that rested in front of a desk, finally letting her eyes rest on the clown. There was blood on his collar and his gloves. There was also some smeared on his mouth, almost as if he had attempted to hastily

wipe it off before coming in the room.

"As in, the creator of the universe?" she asked quietly, remembering what the female member of the brethren had told her about the Great Turtle.

"Yes," he replied, standing with his arms at his sides, not moving. There was no expression, no detectable emotion on the demon's face.

Ana snorted, folding her arms across her chest. "How is that even possible?"

Pennywise giggled darkly in response.

"Did you...?" she started in disbelief, but he quickly denied it.

"No, no, silly!" he said, his broken buck teeth gleaming at her as he flashed his crazed smile. "Little Ana, you really don't remember anything about anything, do you?"

"I think we've established that," she replied aloofly. "Thanks for reminding me."

"When you were fae, all you and your little friends did was worship the stupid beast. It's all your pathetic race lived for," he replied, taking a few steps into the room, his imposing frame starting to take up her entire view from the chair. "You think you'd remember *something* from all of that wasted time spent on your knees in those temples!"

"You'd think," she said, more to herself than to Pennywise, the conversation unable to fully pull her thoughts way from the infinite vicious cycle of hate. He watched her for a few moments, his golden stare unwavering. Then, he started to giggle.

"You want me to kill those stupid monks?" he exclaimed merrily, his voice growing high-pitched as he grew more and more amused.

"No!" Ana countered, growing defensive in an attempt to deny she was not that grotesque. Even so, she knew it was useless. He was seeing her fantasies as clearly as they were his own. "I don't *want* you to kill them! It just...feels good to picture that shit sometimes."

He approached her slowly, coming to bend down in front of her, his bloodied face inches in front of hers. "It feels even *better* to actually do it," he said, his voice low and suggestive.

"You're disgusting," she hissed. He started to move his face closer to hers, and against her better judgment, she went to slap his face, but he caught her wrist in his gloved hand with little effort. A low growl emitted from his throat.

"Rude, naughty girl," he said, the rumbling words sounding more like flattery than disapproval. "I bet in your original, sparkling, pitiful body you would never even dream of trying to contend with me."

"Sorry to disappoint you," she replied sarcastically. She knew she was pushing her luck. Even though Pennywise seemed amused with their banter, she knew all it took was one wrong move to completely transform his mood. However, the conversation was starting to peak her interest and pull her out of her blackening hatred, and she found herself wondering how much the clown actually knew about her home dimension.

Just as those thoughts were starting to form, Pennywise suddenly let go of her arm, stood, and started to walk out of the room. She cursed him silently, figuring he knew she was starting to want answers from him, and he was going to torture her by withholding the knowledge. She swallowed down the instinct to call after him and stayed rooted to her spot, but it only lasted moments before she stood and limped after him.

"Fucking clown," she mumbled under her breath as she watched him start to go up the staircase. "Where are you going?" she asked, feeling a bit ashamed that she was following him.

"Boy, you sure are needy!" he teased, reaching the top of the steps and turning to go down the hallway. "Can't you function without me for two seconds, sweet girl?"

"God damnit, stop pretending like you don't know what I want!" she yelled after him as he disappeared into a room. "We're stuck in this house together, why don't you just humor me a little?" After no response, she started to debate whether or not she was going to try

and get up the stairs even with her sore ankle, then pictured herself toppling down and injuring herself further. She sighed in exasperation.

"*Please,* will you come back here and answer some of my questions - "

She was cut off abruptly, yelping as he suddenly appeared next to her at the bottom of the staircase, his grinning face staring down at her.

"Fucking shit, do you always have to do crap like that?" she complained loudly. "It's not like my being afraid makes me smell any better to you."

"Force of habit!" he said in a sing-song voice. "And by the way, I'd like to point out that *you* are stuck in this house, sweet girl. I *choose* to be here with you."

"Lucky me," she croaked in reply as he placed a long arm under arms to help her get up the stairs.

"You don't sound very grateful that I came down here to get you," he said, continuing his childlike game of power play.

"Thank you," she breathed, the words sounding absurd as they left her mouth. She rolled her eyes as he giggled at her. Once they reached the top of the stairs, he started to lead her into a bedroom. It was the same one that he had locked her in before going to battle the Losers Club, although this time, the bedding looked a lot cleaner and the whole room a lot more inviting.

She had hoped that Pennywise would be fine with just sitting on the bed, but she found herself being pulled down to lie on her side, his long body spooning hers, making her mind flash back to the night at the hospital when they had shared this embrace after he had bitten her and licked up her blood. The difference this time was that she was being held by a demon clown with blood on his clothing, rather than handsome Robert. She was glad she was facing the wall, not having to stare into his crooked, golden gaze and wonder whose blood was smeared across his mouth.

He smelled her, then let out a hot breath on the back of her neck. It

made her tremble.

"You'll answer some of my questions?" she asked awkwardly, hoping she'd be able to distract him from the scent he found so exhilarating. He grunted in response, and she took it as a sign to continue. However, he started to talk before she could ask him anything.

"Your universe was created by the turtle before this one," he said, his voice low and even. She rarely heard him speak like that. "But not that long before. When it was new, and your race of creatures roamed the planet, I went there to feed. Like I do here. The fae were there instantly, right after the planet was formed. No waiting, like I had to when I first came to Earth."

"Fast food," Ana said, surprised that she was able to joke at a time like this. The Eater of Worlds let out a low chuckle.

"Yes, but the stupid turtle really liked your race. He told me before I went there, 'Brother, please do not disturb them. They are innocents, their only desire in life to please me and love others, blah, blah,' or something ludicrous like that. That only made them more enticing, of course. I went there, and the smell, *oh*, the smell," he said, and she felt the drool start to fall on her neck as he spoke, "It was nothing like I've ever experienced before, and never have again."

"Until now," Ana interjected, referring to herself.

"No, no!" he retorted, giggling at her. "Your smell is similar, and scrumptious, but it is diluted and immensely weakened. If you were perfumed as beautifully as the ones on your planet, I would have killed and eaten you instantly." His admittance that he was able to control himself and keep from eating her was little comfort. She was starting to catch on with where this story was going.

"I killed several of them right away, with no hesitation. No needing to scare any of them to flavor the meat. They were the best meals I've ever had. But I got sick soon after, grew weak. If the the remaining ones hadn't been so new to their existence, had known a way to harm me, I think I could have been killed. I hid away, deep within the planet for thousands of years to sleep, and once I was well enough to leave, I came here."

"Why didn't Maturin kill you?" she asked, knowing the question might anger him, but too deep into the subject to care at the moment. Thankfully, his demeanor didn't change.

"The turtle was dumb. Old, lazy, foolish. The only smart thing he did was to give those little angelic bastards a defense, so if I killed one of his precious little creations, it would poison the meat." It made sense to her now, but she found herself feeling sorry for the humans, wondering why Maturin didn't extend them the same courtesy to protect them from Pennywise.

"You said he referred to you as 'Brother'?" she asked.

"Like I said, dumb."

"So..." she started tentatively, not knowing what would possibly anger Pennywise, "You haven't been there since? That was your only experience there?"

"I can't go back there," he said. "Even after getting sick, I wouldn't be able to control my appetite." She was surprised he was willing to admit that he had any sort of weakness. Of course, it didn't matter if she knew all of this; he would have to kill her and eat her to get sick, and if she was dead it's not like she'd be able to do anything to harm him.

"So why me?" came her next inquiry. His gloved fingers were lightly caressing her elbow as she spoke, but she barely noticed now, her mind going one hundred miles an hour. "Why did the monks choose to 'bind' me and bring me here?"

"Pennywise doesn't know," came his answer, his voice seeming to grow quieter, as if the clown was growing sleepy. She almost found it a little endearing, then silently scolded herself.

"Was it random? Or did I do something?"

"Don't know," he said again. It seemed as though the conversation was coming to a close, Pennywise having already shared his experience with her. She was about to ask how long ago he'd been on her home planet, since Mike had said he'd been on Earth for billions

of years, but decided against it. If he was going to fall asleep, then maybe he wouldn't try to seduce her like he had done when he had last been 'Robert.'

The thought was one of the last that Ana could remember, as she fell asleep quickly after that, her mind exhausted from the roller coaster of emotions she'd been experiencing. Maybe her slumber would have been a bit more restful if she had been blessed with a dreamless sleep, but her subconsciousness apparently did not agree.

She was a bystander in this dream, much like she had been when the brethren leader had brought her into darkness and then showed her her former self. She felt at peace, much like she had been while watching herself move through the terrain and walked towards the temple. However, the scene that was playing out in front of her was much, much different.

Once again, she was watching her original self, this Ana having bright, flowing blue hair that went down to her waist, her white skin glowing. Her head was adorned with a wreath of bright red flowers, but gone was the white flowing cloak; she was lying naked on a bed similar to the she had just fallen asleep on. She watched as the figure of a towering, costumed clown walked into the room, and the blue-haired woman smiled as she saw him, no fear evident on her virtuous features. Even watching him approach the bed, Ana didn't feel afraid for her. The clown lowered himself on top of her, pushing her back gently so he could come to rest between her milky white legs, and he started to plant kisses on her face, her jaw, her neck. The woman writhed beneath him in obvious pleasure, little moans escaping her lips as his hands explored her entire body.

He growled as he started to kiss her passionately, their tongues moving in a sultry, but seemingly intimate dance, as if the two had done this countless times before. The heat in the room grew palpable as the two continued, their hands exploring each other's bodies without any reluctance. Soon, the clown had pulled his erection from his silk pants, entering her slowly, the growl he was emitting purely primal as he started to thrust.

Their moans were almost in sync as they continued, the pace quickening as time went on. Both of them appeared to be lost in the

moment, nothing apparent to them except for the act that was taking place. Ana, still witnessing it take place in front of her like she was viewing a play, still felt content even though she knew she shouldn't be; she was still fully aware that it was *her* underneath the the demon clown as he pounded into her. But the feeling of peace was disrupted suddenly when she saw the cloaked figure form in the corner of the room, watching them with its face hidden under the dark red hood.

With the appearance of the monk, Pennywise's pace suddenly turned erratic and animal-like, like he was unable to control himself any longer. The woman beneath him looked up at him worriedly, just as he started to open his mouth and the unending rows of sharp teeth began to appear; she looked as though she was going to call out to him, but he bit into her throat mercilessly before she could, blood spurting everywhere and covering them both.

Ana woke with a start then, the view in front of her still the bedroom wall, but it was dark now. It took a few seconds for her to realize that Pennywise was still wrapped around her, possessively trying to keep her close to his body. He didn't seem to be disturbed now that she was awake, but she knew it was only a matter of him waking up, and then he would know all about her dream, too.

12. Chapter 12

The next morning, Pennywise was unrelenting with his boisterous tormenting. She had had only a few moments of tranquility after he had awoken from his slumber before her dream was apparent to him, and he has instantly started on his mission to embarrass her about it. "Sweet girl is *so naughty*!" he had cackled first thing, his voice flooding the previously quiet room. Upon hearing this statement, Ana had nearly fallen on the floor in her rush to get away from him. He followed her out of the room and down the hall, but was charitable in the fact that he had allowed her to enter the bathroom alone and close the door so she could relieve herself.

"You need to take a bath, you dirty girl!" he snickered through the door as she was pulling up her pants.

"Shut up!" she yelled back.

"Oh, is my dirty girl *angry?"* he continued without pause, the giggling seemingly to continue seamlessly even when he spoke, he was so amused. "Maybe Pennywise can make her happy again with some sweet little kisses, eh?" She responded with a slew of curse words, only encouraging the clown to chortle louder. She freshened up, her aggravation making her splash water not only on her face but all over the mirror and floor as well, and threw the door open with a bang.

"What, no witty remarks?" Pennywise asked as she pushed past him, heading towards the staircase.

"No," she said starting to go down by herself, not caring if she tripped and tumbled down. When he reached out to steady her, she yanked her arm away from, nearly throwing herself off balance in the process. "Don't touch me," she grumbled. She managed to make it down to the next floor without issue, but he suddenly appeared in front of her, blocking her way.

"Come on, little girl," he said, his face frowning in mock hurt as he looked down at her, "Don't you want to play with the clown?"

"Not particularly," she replied, and he let out a loud sigh, like an

irked child not getting his way. She started to make her way to the kitchen. "I'd rather get some breakfast." He followed her closely, not touching her, but still very much in her bubble.

"So, was Pennywise *good*?" he jeered at her. "Did he you touch you in all the right places?"

She didn't answer him, pulling the pizza box from the night before towards her and opening it, grimacing down at the room temperature slices that had been sitting out. She hadn't thought to throw the box in the fridge after the little revelation they had shared, and now this was the only option for a meal she currently had.

"You seem to be brushing over the fact that it ended with you *murdering me*," she said finally, pushing the box away from her.

"It's just a dream!" he said, standing across the counter from where she stood, pushing the box back towards her. "Do you think you've started having powers of premonition suddenly, sweet girl?"

"If it's just a dream, then let's stop talking about it," she countered.

"Oh, scared little girl," he said mockingly, pushing out his lower lip in a fake pout. "Don't worry, if it comes true I'll protect you from the stupid monk!"

"That's not the scary part!" she said, exasperated.

"I'm not going to eat you," he said, patting her on the hand as if he was trying to reassure her. She looked up into his eyes, stupidly wondering if he was being sincere for a split second, and saw the devilish smile on his face.

"Yeah, only because of your own self interest," she replied, pulling her hand away from him. "Now, can we talk about getting some real food around here? I'm starving."

"Hey, I didn't eat you even before I knew what you were," Pennywise said, and she sensed his demeanor was starting to shift, his face darkening dangerously as the smile disappeared. It always seemed to catch her off guard when his mood changed instantly, never knowing what was really going to set it off. Obviously, the clown had some

insecurities, no matter how full of himself he seemed.

Even though she sensed the danger, it didn't keep her from suddenly becoming angry herself. "Oh, that's what you want? Some praise for not killing me and eating me? Wow, you're such a nice demon! I bet all the kids tell you that before you kill them!"

In a split second he had rounded the counter and grabbed her by the throat, pushing her back and slamming her into the fridge. Choking for air, she merely glared at him, not giving him the satisfaction of trying to plead with him to stop.

"I can still kill you, you know," he said lowly, and she saw his mouth start to shift from the normal crooked smile he normally wore, to the rows of little pointed teeth that she had seen in her dream, before he ripped her throat out. "Kill you, and not eat you." His eyes started to shift outward, becoming so crooked he wasn't even looking at her anymore. The sight horrified Ana, not because he was so angry he was on the verge of killing her, but because she was experiencing the same thing that so many innocent people saw before he devoured them.

Something in his mood changed swiftly again, and he let go of her, leaving Ana to slink away from him and grasp at her throat as she attempted to catch her breath. She clamored over to the the dining room table to take a seat, still rubbing her neck as she glanced over at his hunched-over frame that still faced the fridge. Finally, he turned back around, the rows of little razors retracted back into his mouth, his golden eyes back into almost normal position again.

"We'll go to town and get you some food," he said, low and even. "Food is important."

She was silent for a few moments, then decided to go along with the calm, not wanting to be nearly choked to death again. "Okay."

He left then, heading down towards the basement, and she didn't question him. She took the few minutes to herself sit in the chair with her head back and her eyes closed, mentally preparing herself for going into public with the demon clown.

She heard the squeak of some wheels along with footsteps, and there was Robert pushing a scroungy black wheelchair into view.

"Your carriage awaits, madame," Robert quipped, motioning for her to come and sit in the chair.

"That's from the sewers, isn't it?" she asked, eyeing the trail of water and chunks of who knows what that trailed behind the wheels.

"Yeah," Robert replied, slapping the seat a few times, repeating his request. She complied, and soon they were outside on the sidewalk and heading towards downtown Derry. "I thought we'd get you a proper set of crutches, and a brace for your ankle," he was saying, and a couple across the street was waving at them as if they knew them. Ana turned her head towards Robert in time to see him waving back and smiling, as if this was a completely normal thing for him to be doing.

"Don't be rude, Ana," he said, as she stared at him, and she gave him a look as to say, 'What the fuck?' and then she waved exaggeratedly at couple, who had already passed them and didn't see her.

"Do you go out and interact with people regularly?" she asked, astonished at what had just taken place. "Do you know them?"

"I don't care who they are," he said as he pushed her down the sidewalk. "But people seem to take a particular liking to Robert Gray either way."

No kidding, she thought to herself, remembering how quickly she had let him kiss her on the couch not so long ago, even the thought of his beautiful eyes giving her unwanted butterflies in her belly. Robert giggled, and she folded her arms, keeping her eyes forward.

"I don't want to hear it," she warned, as if it would keep him from relentlessly badgering her if he wanted to.

As they got closer to the drug store they were heading towards, she started to worry about who they could run in to. Thankfully, Ana didn't know that many people in Derry, but her mind went to Mike, who would recognize that she was still in Pennywise's clutches. And

if she saw her family, she had no idea how she'd explain any of this.

"Mike is gone," Robert said quietly. "He packed up and left town the day after they 'defeated' me."

Ana was surprised, but happy at the news. "Good," she said.

"Good that your *boyfriend* left town," Robert replied, his voice nearing a growl as he said it. "If he came sniffing around I'd have to make a meal out of him."

"My boyfriend?" Ana asked, his unexpected statement completely throwing her off. "He wasn't my boyfriend, I barely knew the guy. We just - "

"Planned my demise?" he said, cutting her off. With that, they entered the drug store, the little bell ringing on the door. Ana was relieved that the conversation ended there. Getting her some supplies for her injured limb was uneventful, other than Ana being weirded out by all the smiles and greetings that Robert was being given. They left the store, now heading towards the grocery store. A mother and little blonde girl were walking towards them on the sidewalk, and Robert gave the girl a smile, and sweet sounding, "Hello!". As they walked passed, she caught him turning around to watch her.

"Knock it off," she seethed. He chuckled darkly but kept pushing her in the chair. Once inside the grocery store, Ana hurried to pick out some essentials for her to live off of, hoping desperately that they wouldn't pass any more children in the aisles as they shopped. To her dismay, a small brown-haired boy came running around the corner into the cereal section they were in, and Robert immediately snapped to attention as he stood by them, eyeing the sugary choices in front of them.

"Hello, Danny," Robert said, bending down to offer the boy a sticker that had appeared out of nowhere. Ana was about to protest, when she heard a familiar voice from the next aisle.

"Mommy, I want mac and cheese!" came Ronnie's little voice, and Ana's heart skipped a beat. Surely, Robert - no, Pennywise - would sense her sudden panic. But she glanced at him, and he was

completely entranced by the little boy, who was laughing and something Robert had just said.

"I have to go to the bathroom," she said quickly, and Robert barely ripped his eyes away from what he was doing, enthralled by the idea of a new victim. Ana grabbed her new crutches, leaving the wheelchair where it sat, and moved as quickly as she could around the corner to see her nephew. Why she suddenly decided it was a good idea to talk to her family, she couldn't logically reason, but for some reason felt like she had to. As she moved away from Robert and his potential prey, she felt bad for leaving the two alone instead of trying to distract him from his predatory thoughts, but it was rare that he was that distracted.

She hobbled over to Ronnie, who was still looking intently at the blue macaroni and cheese boxes and didn't see her right away; Cassandra was further down the aisle facing away from them, her face bent down towards her phone. "Ronnie!" Ana whispered fervently, and the boys eyes landed on her instantly. She pulled the boy into a quick one-armed hug, and then squatted down to his level. "Listen Ronnie, there's not a lot of time, but you and Heather and your mom and dad need to get out of here. You need to leave Derry, or the clown might take you again!"

Ronnie was looking at her with a strange look on his face, as if he was trying to comprehend what she was saying. "You have to Ronnie, tell your mom whatever you have to, but you have to leave - "

"Mom?" Ronnie suddenly called, and Cassandra finally noticed that Ana was there. She expected some sort of confused greeting from her sister, but she said nothing at first as she approached them. Ana smiled up at her, still squatting on the ground.

"Hi, Cass," she started, but when her sister looked down at her, it was pure venom.

"What do you think you're doing?" she said angrily, reaching down to grab Ronnie's hand and pull him away. "Stop talking to my son!" She started to stomp off towards her cart, leaving Ana hurt and confused for a few moments. She stood up and took a few steps towards them with her crutches.

"Cass, what - "

"You heard me!" Cassandra said, looking Ana up and down, obviously eyeing up her tattered clothing and messy hair. "Stay away from us, or I'll call the cops!" she continued, brandishing her phone.

Ana was aware that Robert was now in the aisle with them, but a new reason for her alarm was coming to light. "Cass, don't you recognize me?"

"Should I?" Cassandra replied hotly, then started to round the corner to the next section. Ronnie looked back and gave a small, polite wave, then followed his mom.

"They don't remember me," Ana whispered as the realization hit her. It felt like the ground was dropping out from under her, and the world started to spin around. She barely felt Robert's arms as he caught her from crumpling to the ground and guided her safely back into the wheelchair. It seemed like a blur then, as Robert took them to the cashier to check out their groceries, and then they were heading back to Neibolt house. Ana said nothing the entire way there, just staring into space.

She still sat in the chair as he wheeled her into the sitting room, going to put the groceries away. The shock of what had just happened along with her lack of nourishment was taking a toll on her, and she couldn't decide on withdrawing into herself forever, or exploding and attacking everything around her. When Robert finally entered the room again, the decision was made for her.

"You should eat something," he said, his blue eyes looking at her, obvious concern etched on the shape shifter's face.

"Fuck you," Ana said quietly, not looking at him.

"Excuse me?" he said, taking a few steps forward, but Ana's rage suddenly sprang to life.

"Fuck! You!" she screamed, launching herself out of the wheelchair at him, the pain in her ankle completely ignored as she reached for his throat, but he caught her arms with ease and held her back. He let

out a short laugh as she struggled to attack him. "It's all your fault! It's *your* fault they don't remember me!" she yelled, white hot anger clouding her senses.

"*My* fault?" he asked, as if the very notion was completely unreasonable. "I had nothing to do with it!"

"Liar!" she said, and she spit in his chiseled face. She noticed the annoyance at her actions, his eyes narrowing dangerously as he looked at her, but she didn't care. "You're a fucking evil, sadistic murderer and you're lying!"

"Newsflash, Ana!" Robert argued, dragging her enraged form towards the couch and shoving her down, then coming to kneel on the floor in front of her, his face level with hers. "*I'm* not the one who bound you, and took you away from your home and brought you here against your will! *I'm* not the one who made all these false memories so you thought you had this family, and I'm damn sure not the one who took them away!"

His statements were starting to poke holes in her wild accusations, and she felt her rage start to lessen, giving way to intense, unwavering sorrow. She felt the tears start to spring forward as she looked into his blue eyes. "No, but you're the one keeping me in this house with you," she said, the tears starting to run down her face, "and that's just as bad!"

"Hey babe," he said, baring his teeth at her menacingly as he spoke, "I hate to break it to you, but you agreed to this little arrangement!" He stood then, turning to go back into the kitchen. "And as it turns out, you did it for kids that aren't even the same species as you!" It was a petty jab, a punch to the gut that took her breath away. Ana stared after him in shock, all hope draining out of her as he left the room.

After the traumatizing events of that day, Robert was unable to get Ana to eat anything, and resorted to bringing her up the bedroom for the night. He had spooned her again, slowly trying to feel out if she was responding to his advances, but she had no reaction whatsoever. He was used to her being appalled at the idea of him touching her, but at least her negative feelings gave him some sort of entertainment. It frustrated him, to the point that he left and spent

the rest of the night in sewers, which is what his usual routine was before her.

For the next several days, she barely moved from the bed, only willing to get up to use the bathroom a few times. She took a shower at one point only after Pennywise threatened to drag her in there and shower with her, and even that was barely motivation enough for her. On the fourth day of her lying on her side, staring at the wall, Pennywise decided enough was enough. His plaything wasn't very much fun in this state, and he wanted her back to the way she was so they could argue, talk, occasionally share a sarcastic laugh, maybe even fight.

Ana was doing her usual staring at the wall, when she felt little footsteps enter the room, but she didn't turn to see who it was at first.

"Auntie Ana?" came Heather's sweet voice, and at first Ana wasn't sure if she had actually heard it. "Will you come and play with me?"

Knowing she heard the question, she turned around to see her niece standing there, looking at her with wide, wondering eyes.

"Hey, baby," she said softly, sitting up in the bed. "What are you doing here?" Her first thought was that she was going crazy, which was likely.

"I came to see you," she said. "Will you come down to the kitchen and make me a peanut butter sandwich?"

"I thought you wanted to play," Ana replied, giving the girl a small smile.

"I do," Heather said. "But first we should eat something."

She knew it was either her mind playing tricks on her, or someone playing tricks on her, but she had been in her own dark thoughts for so long now that a part of her didn't care. She grabbed her crutches that had been leaning up against the headboard, and followed the little girl downstairs and into the kitchen. The constant hum that was in her body telling her Pennywise was near was as present as ever, but she chose to ignore it.

She made Heather a peanut butter sandwich, and then one for herself at the girl's insistence. Neither one of them touched the food at first.

"Mommy always says that eating every day is important," Heather said, looking down at Ana's untouched plate.

"I'll have some if you have some," Ana said, smiling at the girl. After a bit of silence, Heather finally picked up her food, and took a bite. Her disgusted expression as she slowly chewed and attempted to choke it down told Ana exactly what she was suspecting, and she turned to leave and go back upstairs.

"Wait, Ana!" the little girl called to her. "Where are you going?"

"Back to bed."

"Don't you love me?" Heather asked in her sweet little voice, and Ana stopped walking for a moment at the sentiment. But she reminded herself who she was actually talking to, and kept going. "If you want us to stay safe, maybe you should take care of yourself like Pennywise says."

Ana stopped again then, and swung around to face her, crutches and all.

"Is that a threat?" she whispered, staring into the little girl's innocent looking face. When she didn't respond, she threw a crutch at her as hard as she could, hitting her square in the face. The voice behind the yelp of pain that followed was much, much deeper than little Heather's. Satisfied with the reaction she provoked, Ana turned again to go upstairs.

"*Why* are you being so difficult?" came Pennywise's voice behind her. When she didn't answer him, he suddenly appeared in front of her, blocking her path.

"Why are you even asking?" Ana responded shrilly. "Why even bother?"

"You need to start eating. I didn't bring you here and send my friends away early so you could starve and die." He was so obsessed with eating, Ana mused. Made sense, considering all the entity did was,

eat, sleep, repeat. Oh, and torment her.

"Or what?" she challenged, not backing down as he shoved his angry face closer and closer to hers. "Are you going to go back on our deal? Eat the kids?" He didn't respond to her, the expression on his face growing more and more menacing. "Maybe you should have specified what this little arrangement was supposed to be, hmm? I'm in the house with you, aren't I?"

Rather than answer her, he grabbed her by the back of the neck, and started to drag her towards the stairs that led to the basement. He was beyond angry at this point, Ana could tell, and she wouldn't be surprised if he gave into his primal instincts and just killed her. Part of her welcomed it.

He brought her down the well and into the sewers, a place she hadn't been since he had taken Ronnie. This time, he didn't bother to keep her out of the cold, dirty water as they splashed along, not caring if she was nearly tripping and causing pain to her bad leg as he dragged her. They ended up back in the dungeon where all the bodies were floating, and this time Ana didn't hesitate to look up at them, their presence only adding fuel to the fire that was her hatred for the demon clown that currently had her in his grip.

He let go of her when they neared the pile of junk. His eyes were nearly overtaken with red, the usual gold barely specks at this point.

"Didn't want to get the house dirty?" she sneered at him, all caution out the window as she spoke. She didn't care about anything at this point.

"Huh?" he grunted, his own anger obviously keeping him from seeing all of her thoughts right away. When he understood what she meant, that she thought he was going to kill her in a violent, bloody way, he barked out a cruel laugh. "You think you see me, sweet, innocent, little Ana, but you have no idea!" he growled at her, and then his hand shot out to grab her by the throat. His mouth started to open wide, the rows of teeth making their appearance, and Ana found herself looking down his throat at three bright, rotating lights. By the time she realized that she was seeing the deadlights, she was floating.

13. Chapter 13

It was an other-worldly feeling, being stuck here in some sort of limbo. Ana wasn't entirely sure if she was dead, or pulled back into the darkness like she had been when the brethren leader had showed her the memory of her former self. But this seemed entirely different. She didn't feel peace, or fear, or anger, or happiness, wherever she currently was. She just, was.

She had little opportunity to try to figure it out. Her mind was suddenly overtaken with the overwhelming, burning desire to feed; it enveloped her very soul as she felt herself hurtling through what seemed to be nothing. Even though she couldn't see anything at all at this point, somehow she knew was moving towards what her very being was screaming out for: food. In no time at all, she made a crash landing into what appeared to be a large body of water, her senses tingling with the excitement that soon, the hunt would begin. She swam through the deep water, sensing that she had more than four limbs as she moved, allowing her to move with grace and speed.

Her head broke the surface of the water. She was near the shore, and caught the most delicious, satisfying, mouth-watering scent she had ever experienced, the hunger now being increased ten fold as she searched for the source. The sight of bipedal beings moving about on the ground confirmed that they were the prey she was desiring so desperately, and it barely registered that there were dozens of them around her as she stormed the beach in a bellowing roar. She reared up on her back four legs, the beings covered in white cloth starting to scatter in fright at her sudden appearance, and she lunged forward to catch one in her giant mouth, razor-like teeth cutting through the flesh like butter. It was the best thing she'd ever tasted, and after swallowing the body in a few gulps, she chased down and caught another, then another.

The instinct to keep hunting was suddenly cut short as a searing pain ran through her entire body. She screeched in agony as she started to stumble about the ground, then smash into the sand in a shuddering heap. Her prey had now completely disappeared, having had the opportunity to flee, and she was alone for an unknown amount of

time, exposed and vulnerable.

Her strength slowly began to return to her little by little as she writhed on the ground, and she was able to pull herself up, dragging a few dead limbs as she searched for a safe place to rest. She found a cave that was nestled in the mountains, taking every ounce of will power to get there and clamber inside, and then curled into a ball to rest. She started to sleep.

In the images that followed where she was quiet and not moving, Ana's mind started to buck the notion that she was suddenly a large, murderous spider-monster. It was almost like trying to concentrate on a thought while nearing drifting off to sleep, but she was able to recognize that what she was experiencing was what Pennywise had described to her, when he had attacked the fae on her home planet and was weakened after eating them. She was seeing Pennywise's past through his point of view.

Even though time seemed irrelevant while Ana was caught in the deadlights, she could sense that it was years before Pennywise started to stir and awaken once again. She now knew she was seeing his past through his perspective, but she was still very much experiencing the feelings he had at the time, and right now, she felt his seething hatred for those stupid little creatures, along with the usual insatiable hunger.

He was hurtling through nothingness again. Another crash landing, this time on a hard, rocky surface, creating a large crater in his wake. Ana knew he had arrived to Earth. The prey he desired had not had the opportunity to evolve yet, so he slumbered under the ground with an empty stomach. Immense, uncontrollable anger over took him as he waited, hating the stupid turtle for essentially banishing him to this predicament and tainting the meat that was so delectable.

The humans had finally taken shape. Ana was absolutely horrified as she experienced through his eyes, the killing and devouring of hundreds of them. Then sleep. Then he awoke again, this time not so desperately hungry, having far less time in between feedings, and he began to experiment. He stalked them, learned their thoughts, memories, desires; eventually he learned that fear was the best way to season the meat. The taste even then didn't come close to what he

had had in the previous dimension, but it was still enjoyable, and it would do.

It was an endless cycle. Eat, sleep; eat, sleep; eat, sleep. Ana thought she would surely go mad after witnessing all of this. She experienced every hunt, every kill, every swallow as he fed. Her horror only multiplied when he started to prefer children, and she felt his pure, animalistic enjoyment as he tormented them and shifted into a countless number of terrifying things. In fact, the only things he ever really felt were hunger, excitement for the hunt, satisfaction after the kill; it was occasionally interspersed with hatred for the turtle, and for the species that he consumed.

Eat, sleep. Eat, sleep. Eat, sleep. She couldn't know how many years had passed, the only evidence being the difference in the clothing that the humans wore and the technology that started to appear. Then, something in his purely primal mind changed, ever so slightly. Pennywise felt the familiar stab of hatred, but this time, it was for himself, for his very existence. But he continued with his routine, doing it for so long that he knew little else.

The next feeling that he had finally experienced...Pennywise was confused even as he was perceiving it, having no idea what it was. He had been stalking a small girl, and found himself enthralled instead with the girl's parents, who were embraced in each other's arms in bed, having just made love. They weren't talking, only staring into each other's eyes, merely content in each other's presence. Ana recognized it instantly: he was lonely.

Another few cycles of feeding and slumbering. Then, she got to see the year that Pennywise had tormented and then battled the Losers Club as kids. He had his first experience with his own fear that time, causing even more confusion and then loathing of his own demonic existence. A small part of him wished that they had been able to finish him off and relieve him of this infinite state of cancerous hatred.

Sleep again. He started the usual feeding frenzy, and then caught Ana's scent for the first time. She relived their initial interactions, feeling his utter delight as he caused her pain and fear, even though he couldn't sense it in the normal way. He felt possessive when he

saw the doctor climbing on top of her, the idea that someone was touching what was *his* letting him experience jealousy. She felt the plan start to spawn in his mind, the one using Ronnie as leverage to keep her with him, and the initial contentment that came after she had agreed. Then, more confusion as he started to feel something else, some sort of vague longing as he realized that they were both alien creatures in this dimension, alone and yet together in that commonality, making him want to be near her constantly. He found himself wanting the woman's affection and approval, making his self-hatred swell even more.

Ana suddenly felt mind being ripped away from Pennywise's mind violently, like someone had reached in to grab her. She gasped as she hit the ground with a thud, landing in sewer water.

She felt dizzy, nauseated, and her head was pounding. The cavern around her seemed to be spinning, and after a few moments of trying to focus her eyes, she saw that Pennywise was standing a few feet away, his gaze unreadable as he watched her. She was about to ask him how long she had been in that trance, when she started to retch, but her empty stomach wasn't producing anything.

"A month," he stated, answering her unspoken inquiry.

"Oh my god," she said, her hand going to squeeze her temples in an attempt to stop the pounding there. "How am I not dead?"

Instead of answering her, he approached her slowly, then bent down to offer her his hand. She flinched at the gesture, making him hiss and pull it away from her.

"You're jumpy," he commented. She didn't have the willpower to look up into face now that he was standing so close to her. She had the memory of an infinite number of people he had killed flashing through her mind, and she couldn't look into those golden eyes just now.

"I am," she said, pushing herself off the ground to stand, pleasantly surprised that her ankle seemed to have healed in the weeks that she had spent hanging in suspension. They stood together in silence for a few tense moments; Pennywise staring down at her, Ana doing

everything she could not to return the gaze. She folded her arms around her chest, attempting to combat the cold.

"Did you see me?" he asked, all hints of his normal demonic disposition undetectable as he spoke. He almost sounded like he was nervous.

"I saw you," she replied quietly, and he stepped closer to her, his head cocked as if he was a dog trying to listen as closely as it could for the sounds of a scurrying rat.

"And?" he pressed, and she started to shake, wondering if it would enrage him when he learned she was absolutely terrified now. She didn't answer him, knowing all he had to do was wait for all of her thoughts and memories to become transparent to him. There was no way to hide it from him now.

She heard him let a low chuckle escape his throat. "Sweet girl, you've got me all wrong," he said, his fingers suddenly entwining themselves in her messy hair, slowly brushing through it. "I showed you all of that so you could see Pennywise for what he is, not fear him."

"I don't fear you," she lied, trying to keep her voice steady as she decided to say something stupid even though it would probably provoke him, "I hate you."

His gloved hand that was almost lovingly caressing her suddenly gripped her hair tightly, and she winced in pain. Against her better judgment, she finally looked into his angry eyes. She expected him to lash out in some way, maybe strike her or bite her, but it never came. Instead, he unceremoniously swung her up into his arms, and they made their way to the well and back up into the house. Once they were in the basement, he let her down just as roughly, almost dropping her.

"Eat!" he barked at her. "And this time, if you choose not to, I'll be bringing my next meal home alive so you can watch." He disappeared back down the well without another word. Ana, finally able to move around painlessly on her own, went up the steps without hesitation, hating the fact that she hoped this hunt would at least be a long one so she could be alone for as long as possible. She wondered whose

poor soul she was wishing this ill fate upon.

She bathed, found clean clothes to put on, then headed to the kitchen. The nausea now replaced by intense hunger, she did as she was commanded to do and finally ate, finding some cereal in the cupboard and unspoiled milk in the fridge. Apparently, he had gone grocery shopping again before pulling her away from the deadlights.

Finished with taking care of herself, the next thing Ana did was start to pace the living room nervously. She didn't really know what she was waiting for; she didn't really believe he was going to bring a person home alive to devour in front of her, but she still couldn't get rid of the shaky feeling inside of her. It seemed like he was gone for hours, and finally exhaustion took over her anxiety. She headed up the stairs and into the bedroom. The blankets looked like they had been untouched for a long time, probably not slept in since she had last done so. She crawled under the covers, taking a little while to calm down, and then finally fell asleep.

She woke up the next morning to find that she was still alone. She got up out of bed to use the bathroom, and then found that the same distress from the night before came rushing back to flood her senses. She shook as she walked down the hallway, unable to quell the nerves.

Pennywise still wasn't back. She couldn't sense him even below her in the sewers. She spent most of the day wandering about the house, not knowing what to do with herself, and then settled on trying to read some smutty romance novel she found in the study. It was mildly successful at distracting her from her uneasiness, but still found that she was unable to concentrate fully. Sometimes, it was the images from the deadlights overtaking her thoughts, but most of the time, she just felt off. She was a few chapters into the book, curled up on a couch in the sitting room, when a sudden sense of calm washed over her. Her face spread into a smile at the sudden relief, and then she felt a pleasant hum start to vibrate in her chest.

She heard his footsteps as Robert approached the room. The realization that her feeling of sudden tranquility was correlating with him coming back to her stole her smile just as quickly is it had come.

"You were gone for a long time," she commented a little too quickly as he crossed the threshold.

"Did you miss me?" he retorted without hesitation. She didn't answer, but she didn't have to. "You *did*!"

"I did not," she argued, but he started to giggle at her denial anyway. "What did you do to me?" she asked the, referring to the constant state of anxiety she had been in while he was gone.

"I didn't do anything. Well, other than the whole deadlight thing," he said, a cocky smile taking over his handsome features.

"You're a liar," she hissed, and he took a few long strides quickly over to the couch she was on, leaning over her menacingly.

"There you go running that pretty little mouth of yours again," he growled at her. He planted a knee on either side of her, moving to straddle her and keep her in place, placing a hand lightly on her throat. "It always seems to get you into trouble, doesn't it, Ana?" He bent down to press his lips firmly on hers, and she attempted to push him off her, but his solid frame didn't budge. He kept kissing her, his tongue running along her bottom lip trying to demand entry, but she pressed her lips shut in defiance. Undeterred by her stubbornness, he simultaneously bit her bottom lip and ran a hand over her clothed chest, and he pushed his tongue into her mouth when she gasped.

As soon as their tongues collided, and much to her dismay, Ana felt a pleasant pulsating begin in her groin. She was telling herself to resist, that this was wrong, but soon found herself kissing him back with so much enthusiasm that she gave in to the urge to reach up and run her fingers through his brown hair. He broke their kissing after a while, moving to suck on her neck, and his hand went up her shirt and started caressing and kneading her breasts.

"Say you want me," he commanded in a low growl as he squeezed her nipple gently. She heard his request, but couldn't bring herself to comply. He rewarded her refusal by squeezing even harder, then slipping a hand into her waistband and started rubbing her clit. She moaned, arching her back at the sensation, but still refused to give him what he wanted. He pressed on, a fist grasping a large chunk of

her hair, and he pulled her head backwards so she got a clear view of his face as he looked down at her. She saw a mix of exasperation and desire clouding his beautiful blue eyes. He slipped a long, pale finger into her then, and she involuntarily bucked her hips.

"Say it," he rasped again.

"I want you," she said finally, barely a whisper. Robert let out a small giggle, then suddenly pulled his hand out of her pants. She was just starting to wonder if this was all just some sort of power play to get her to admit her desire, when he stood and then hoisted her up. She wrapped her legs around his waist and her arms went around his neck to help hold herself up, and through his pants she could feel his long erection pushing into her thigh.

"There, was that so hard?" he said, his familiar mockery ever present even in times like these. He started to carry her up the steps while she was still clinging to him, and the sudden change of scenery brought her out of the moment a bit. She started to feel afraid as she anticipated what was going to happen next.

"Don't worry, sweet girl," he murmured into her ear as they headed towards the bedroom.

"I always worry," she said, and he placed a hand behind her head to pull her into another kiss, as if that would quiet all of her concerns. She pulled away after a few moments, and he dropped her backwards onto the bed, causing her to yelp in surprise. She watched as he quickly pulled off his shirt, then step out of his pants and boxers, his erection suddenly springing free. For a split second, she found it quite humorous that the human version of the demon clown had at one point, had to choose his underwear, and a small smile crossed her lips at the thought.

Robert laughed as he bent crawled onto the bed, forcefully hooking two fingers in her waistband and yanking her pants and underwear down in one swift motion. She instinctively went to cover the area between her legs with her hands, causing him to laugh even more.

"Sweet girl, no reason to be shy now," he teased, causing her to blush. He lowered himself on top of her, starting to kiss her again heatedly,

then hooked a finger under the hem of her shirt. He raised an eyebrow at her, as if seductively trying to ask her permission, and she nodded. Rather than pull the shirt over her head, he quickly used both hands to rip it apart, exposing her breasts.

"I didn't know you were going to do that!" she protested. "That was like, my only shirt."

"I'll get you another," he purred, has lips moving to her collarbone. She was just noticing that his member was pressing painfully into her hip when he slowly placed his hands between her knees to pull them apart. She felt her blush deepen as he nestled himself between her pried apart legs, then guided himself into her entrance. He let out a low groan as he pushed further inside of her, the sound only making her grow wetter.

He didn't talk anymore after that, only letting out gravelly grunts as he thrust in and out of her. Ana felt the tension in her belly grow rather quickly as he moved, losing herself in the feeling of him inside of her, starting to moan with every thrust as well. As Robert neared his climax, Ana saw the rows of teeth start to form, and she closed her eyes in anticipation of a bite, but it never happened. He increased his speed suddenly, and she felt herself start to shudder around his member, losing herself in the sensations of her orgasm. She heard him let out an ethereal groan, his seed spilling inside of her as he came.

When they were done, he rolled off of her, lying on his back next to her.

"See," he said through his panting, "you don't hate me."

It was a jarring statement, pulling her completely out of the moment and making her wonder what was wrong with her. Not wanting to start another heated argument, she didn't say anything, but got up to go to the bathroom, any excuse to get away from him right then.

"Come on, little Ana," he called after her as she walked down the hallway. "Stop fighting it! You *know* you're just as bad as me!" He started to cackle then, and Ana slammed the door to the bathroom, sliding down to the floor. She knew he was just trying to torment her,

but part of her believed every word he said.

Author's note...*FYI, there won't be another chapter posted until Wednesday night at the earliest, but it's more likely that I won't be able to post anything until late Friday/early Saturday. Thank you for your patience :)*

14. Chapter 14

It's strange how time can make an inconceivable, horrid situation start to feel somewhat normal.

The day after Ana had slept with Robert, she spent most of her time as far away from him as possible, not wanting to talk about what had happened or anything related to it. The Eater of Worlds had made it rather difficult, however, and took absolute joy in following her around Neibolt house, jeering at how talented he was between the sheets. She hated him for it, but absolutely loathed herself for having even the slightest bit of enjoyment during the encounter. At first, she branded herself evil in her own right. But as the next few days went on, she had begun to protest her own conscience, inwardly arguing that Pennywise had been corrupting her, easing a small part of her guilt. Of course, all of these thoughts of contempt were highly amusing to her otherwordly housemate, only adding to his constant mockery.

More days passed, and just like that a week had gone by. They started to fall into their own brand of peculiar routine, with Pennywise insisting that he lie next to her in bed while she slept, then following her around as she went about her morning; by midday he had usually disappeared down the well for at least a few hours, and she was left alone to read, or wander about the house, or merely sit in the silence and fight the overwhelming anxiety that now plagued her when she was no longer in his presence. The clown continued to deny that he had intentionally messed with her psyche somehow to make her feel this way, but nonetheless, Ana knew that being caught in the deadlights for so long had connected them somehow. When he was gone, no doubt going about his day terrorizing the citizens of Derry, she was almost beside herself. When he returned, she felt content, complete. But once the initial feeling of serenity washed over her like the warmth of a crackling fireplace, she started to hate herself again. Pennywise must have had similar feelings of gratification upon coming back to the house. More often than not, he would sidle up to her, sometimes pulling her into a possessive embrace to draw in a long inhalation of her scent, before starting in on his usual taunting. He was immensely bothersome to

her, and yet kept making the necessary trips into town to get her food, and replace ripped clothing, and even get her some deodorant.

A few days into the second week, Ana gave into the temptation again. Robert had been lying in bed with her that night instead of Pennywise, his long arms wrapped around her, and she had been doing her best not to ogle at his handsome features. She tried to picture anything but the last time they had had sex, but it only brought those feelings surging forward, and Robert had pounced at the opportunity to seduce her. This time, she only hated herself for a few minutes after they were done, and then feel into a deep, restful sleep.

The weeks turned into a month. Some of the changes between them were so subtle that Ana didn't even notice them; Pennywise was gradually badgering her less and less. On many occasions, Ana spent the evening reading while curled up on the couch, Pennywise seated silently next to her with his gloved hands folded in his lap. She had gotten so used to the demon clown being in such close proximity to her that she only found it weird the first time when he sat there for hours, his golden eyes staring into nothing as she read. Sometimes she wondered if he was entered into her mind as she read, experiencing the stories along with her. After that, it was a welcome normality.

She slept with Robert numerous times the next month after that. The days had started to run together, and she had completely lost count of how many times she had thrown caution to the wind and just given in to the urge. Sometimes it was while lying in bed, the feeling of already being next to one another naturally leading into it. Other times, Robert would suddenly grab her and push her up against a counter, or a wall, or push her down onto the couch for a vigorous kiss. Once the deed had become part of their routine, Ana noticed that he was spending more and more time around her as Robert rather than Pennywise. A very small part of her almost felt bad for him because of it, like she wasn't being accepting of his 'real' self, but she quickly reminded herself that she shouldn't feel bad for an evil entity and pushed it out of her mind.

It could have been many months she had been in Neibolt house with him, at this point she was completely unsure. Not ever having anyone

around to have a normal conversation with, she had no way to draw any intelligible conclusions as to what the date was. One night, they were partaking in their usual activity of sitting on the couch while she read, and Ana had the sudden urge to know.

"Pennywise?" she asked, looking up from her novel. He was seated next to her, hands on his legs, his painted white and red face looking as intimidating as ever. It took a few seconds for him to break out of whatever trance he had been in before he turned to look at her.

"Mmm," he grunted. "Pennywise doesn't care what day it is."

She rolled her eyes at his response. She was convinced she was going to completely lose her ability to meaningfully converse with someone, as she was used to the only being she interacted with reading her thoughts.

"But I want to know," she countered.

"It doesn't matter," he quipped gruffly. "Keep reading, I want to know if Bella goes back to Edward."

It was almost endearing to her, the fact that Pennywise sometimes became invested in the stories she was reading. But her insistence on getting her unspoken question answered made her clap the book shut in defiance. He turned to look at her with a devilish grin on his face.

"Sweet girl is being gutsy," he mused, scooting closer to her.

"Why can't you just answer my question?" she continued as he leaned his face closer to her. When she suddenly jumped up from the couch to stand in front of him, he growled quietly in disapproval.

"All that matters is when I eat, and when I go back to sleep," he said, finally caving to her request. She was finding it was easier to get him comply as time went on.

"Okay," she started slowly, trying to keep him on track now that he was deciding to cooperate. "So when do you go back to sleep?"

Pennywise shrugged. "When I'm done eating."

She stared at time, trying to get a read on his expression. From what she could tell, he was just telling her as he saw it, not trying to trick her. She sighed.

"What happens when you go back to sleep?" she asked. As she said it, she was a bit surprised she hadn't inquired to this earlier in her confinement to this house. She had been so wrapped up on the heaviness of her current predicament, she hadn't thought that far ahead.

"You go to sleep with me," he said nonchalantly.

"What? How is that even - "

"You wouldn't understand how it works, little Ana," he interrupted gruffly. "Don't worry your pretty head about it."

She was silent for a few moments, trying to process this new revelation. Then, she started in again, as always continuing with her boldness. "What if I don't want to? I could live my life, and in 27 years when you're awake again - "

"No," he said quickly, shaking his head. "You'll stay by my side, like you agreed."

"I *agreed* to stay in this house with you."

He giggled then, the first time in this conversation that was quickly morphing into an argument. "Do the math, sweet girl. Little Ronnie and Heather will only be in their thirties when I wake up again!"

Ana's mouth fell open in shock at his statement, and the crudeness of its implication. It had been a long time since he had outwardly mentioned the kids to threaten her into compliance. "I can't believe you," she hissed, turning to storm out of the room, but he grabbed her waist before she could go more than a step, pulling her down so she was sitting in his lap.

"What, you're surprised? Did you forget who you're dealing with?" he said, a mirthful giggle leaving his red lips. He brushed her hair aside, then planted a few kisses on the back of her neck. She felt herself instantly start to melt at the intimate contact. He started to gently

nibble at the nape of her neck, causing a moan to escape her lips. Her noises encouraging him further, and he responded by biting down harder. She felt the warm blood start to run down her shoulder. Pennywise suddenly flipped her around so she was straddling his hips, and he started to lap at the red liquid like it was honey.

"Won't that make you sick?" she asked breathlessly, fear starting to blossom as she wondered if he was suddenly losing control of himself.

"Only if I kill you first," he purred, continuing to lick at her skin. The statement, being infected with the morbid word, seemed to instantly pull Ana out of her lustful feelings, and she found herself staring down in horror at the clown as he continued to consume her bodily fluids.

Images that she had seen in the deadlights started to flood her consciousness. The faces of a few random people he had killed came rushing back to her, and she started to feel the panicked need to get away from the predator that currently had his arms wrapped around her to keep her in place.

He must have been completely focused on the pleasurable taste of her blood, because at first he didn't seem to notice her struggling. As she started to push on his shoulders and try to free herself from his iron-clad grasp, he finally started to lift his head to look at her. As soon as he saw the look of anguish on Ana's face, he let go of her, and she scrambled away as fast she could, then started to bolt from the room. Ana had made it to the top of the staircase, intending on going into the bedroom, but suddenly Pennywise was blocking her way.

"Move," she said, not willing to look up at his face, her gaze focused on one of his red pom-pom's. She hoped he would turn back into Robert so she wouldn't have to picture the clown killing people again.

"No," he started, his voice a low growl. "No, no, NO!" He shouted the last word, bending down so his face was level with hers. She avoided his eyes, and he grabbed her chin roughly, tilting her face up towards him. Instantly, Ana's eyes locked with his, and she felt tears start to pour down her face. "Robert isn't here, sweet, innocent, little Ana. *I* am. But even it he was," he continued, giving her face a quick

squeeze when she tried to look away from him again, "It doesn't change the fact that *Pennywise is Robert*. Stop trying to make yourself feel all angelic and moral by pretending it's not true!"

"I can't let myself believe that," she said quietly, doing her best to keep her voice even. "I can't do it. You're evil, you're a killer - "

"And you fuck me," he rumbled, his eyes narrow in a dangerous glare, "And you like it."

"Stop it," she pleaded, but he was determined that today would be the day she accepted fully that no matter his form, this was him. He kissed her roughly, her face still gripped in his gloved hand. After a few moments, he pulled away, and she didn't speak right away.

Ana willed herself to open her eyes before she spoke, to bravely meet his gaze although she was feeling anything but. "I'm sorry. But I can't."

He let go of her then, another growl of annoyance escaping his throat. He allowed her to push past him then, and she went into the bedroom without another word.

Ana knew the moment he left the house, the now familiar feeling of nervousness flooding her senses as she laid on the bed in a puddle of tears. The facade of believing Robert was different, was a *person*, was now broken, and she wasn't sure how she'd be able to handle the fact that she'd been sleeping with a demon and loving it.

She took a long, albeit not relaxing, bath after that. It seemed Pennywise had only been gone for an hour or two, when he came through the front door. She met him at the bottom of the stairs, delightedly surprised to see that, although he was still presenting to her in clown from, he was clutching a small flat screen television in his arms. Ana snorted out a laugh at the sight.

"Did you go shopping?" she asked. He headed into the sitting room with the electronic device, and she spotted a plastic bag draped over his arm as well. He set the TV down on the ground, then stared at it like it was the most confusing thing in the world.

"Humans like to look at these," he stated matter-of-factly.

"Yes, I believe they do," she said, unable to hide the half small that was cracking on her face. "So we had a fight, and you went and got me a present?" It was her opportunity to tease him, something that didn't come a long very often. When she did it, it usually was a small blow to his inflated ego, making him annoyed with her banter.

"Make it work," he said, and she bent down to plug it in. Naturally, the enchanted house wasn't set up for cable, but she found that the television had a DVD player built in.

"Let me see," she said, reaching out towards him, and he dropped the bag down by her side. There was a completely random assortment of DVD's in there, everything from children's movies to documentaries to exercise tapes, but she was excited to have something different to do nonetheless.

They put in *Phantom of the Opera,* a musical that Ana had adored, or at least her fake memories believed she had. Either way, she was absolutely tickled to watch it again. It was laughable, the idea that she was seated on the couch watching a movie with Pennywise like it was just a normal thing to be doing, and she caught herself giggling during the opening scene. As the movie progressed, she heard him growl quietly.

"Why do they keep singing?" he asked during a particularly high note of Carlotta's, obviously perturbed by it.

"That's the point," she replied.

"There's no singing in your books," he said, and she laughed at him quietly. No matter how menacing and manipulative Pennywise could be, it always seemed to surprise her at how childlike his perceptions could be when it came to how this world worked.

The movie ended. Ana got up to shut the television off, and she heard him scoff behind her.

"What?" she asked, amused that the clown had an opinion on things such as movies. "Too much singing after all?"

"The ending," he said, not offering much more than that.

"What about it?" Ana asked, growing genuinely curious now.

"The girl. She agreed to stay with him. But he let her go." It hit Ana then how similar her current situation was to the one that she had just seen on the screen. It saddened her a little, having just seen Christine leave with Raoul and her freedom, while she still had no end in the foreseeable future for herself. Pennywise must have been in tune with her thoughts just then. "But he's still alone," he stated, referring to the Phantom being left alone in his lair at the end.

Ana didn't respond. Under different circumstances, she might have grown angry at his assessment of one of her favorite movies, his selfishness obvious. But she found that she was calm, empathetic even, at that moment. She knew it was probably some level of Stockholm syndrome on her part, and the fact that the deadlights had connected them. She was about to thank him for watching the movie, but she knew the statement would probably be lost on Pennywise, as well as sounding ridiculous to her own ears. Instead, she gave him a kiss on his painted cheek.

Author's note... *So this was a fluffy chapter, probably the fluffiest of chapters that will be in this story. I've got a few more ideas with a bit more action coming up, but I think we're nearing the end soon. Hoping to get at least one more chapter posted this weekend. :)*

15. Chapter 15

As the days went on, Ana spent more and more time thinking about when Pennywise would have to go into his deep sleep again, and what that meant for her. The idea of her having to do it with him scared her, mainly because she didn't know how she could possibly survive for those 27 years. When she brought it up to Pennywise again, he simply repeated the same things to her: he'd rest again when he was done eating, she didn't need to understand *how* it could possibly work, only that it would. She was beginning to think maybe he didn't actually know for sure and was just that sure of his abilities. What made her worry was that there was the possibility that he was being overconfident.

Even with her new reasons to feel uneasy, their extremely nontraditional domestic way of life continued. The only thing that had really changed was that Pennywise was no longer spending time in the house in his human form. As a result, the two hadn't had sex since the last time Robert had seduced her. The situation was making both of them a little tense; however, their lack of intimacy was not for lack of trying on Pennywise's part. He was persistently touching her, pulling her closer to him, and shoving his face within an inch of hers whenever he could, and he could sense her arousal at times. But when her shame flooded her mind, he would grow frustrated that she wouldn't move past it. It usually resulted in him angrily using some deragatory variation of the term 'morally-superior', muttering under his breath about 'stupid turtle-worshiping sheep' as he stalked off yet again.

Ana knew she was skating on thin ice. Constantly being around Pennywise, she was always aware of the fact that he mainly functioned on instinct, much like an animal. She tried not to take it for granted that he hadn't given into impulse and just forced himself on her, as lord knows there would be no way she could stop him. When she had positive thoughts towards him like that, it usually astounded her.

She thought she had their arrangement figured out, with Pennywise coming and going as he pleased, and Ana being confined to Neibolt

house indefinitely. One evening, while she was heating up some canned soup and thinking about how bored she was, the alien being took her by surprise yet again.

"Go to town," he said, breaking the silence that surrounded them. He had been standing there watching her with a blank stare, something that she had become accustomed to long ago.

She looked at him in astonishment. "What?"

"I said, go to town," he repeated.

"I heard you," she replied. "You just caught me off guard. What am I going to town for?"

The clown shrugged. "I don't know. Whatever seems entertaining to you."

"Oh," she said, disbelief still gripping her. She hoped this wasn't some sort of game. "You're okay with me doing that?"

"Well yeah, dummy, or I wouldn't be saying it." He always had to get in those little jabs. "You just have to come back to me."

"Obviously," she muttered, pulling her bowl out of the microwave. "How long can I be gone?"

Pennywise resumed his unblinking gaze for a few moments. Apparently, he hadn't thought that far ahead. "If you're gone too long, I'll come get you."

"And if you have to come and get me, you aren't going to be pissed? You're not going to..." she paused, not knowing at the moment how else to word it, "Punish me?" She was referring to the safety of the children, but of course, Pennywise wasn't going to let that slide. He chuckled lowly, the noise coming from deep within his throat.

"Only if you're naughty," he said, reaching out to run a bit of her hair through his gloved fingers. She rolled her eyes, attempting to hide the fact that the gesture gave her butterflies. He giggled as she walked away to sit at the dining room table.

The next afternoon, Ana decided to leave the house, even though she had to fight the nagging internal voice that was telling her not to. The combination of the usual distress when she wasn't with the demon clown, and the worry that this was some sort of test in his mind almost made her stay put. But when she looked through the pile of DVDs to rewatch something yet again, her need for something different to do had won.

She put on her best pair of jeans, (which in reality was her only pair of jeans), the least ragged looking shirt she could find, and her trusty sneakers. Not having had to worry about fashion for some time, it was the first time in a while she concerned herself with possibly looking like she had just crawled out of a dumpster. Reminding herself that the few townsfolk of Derry she had met wouldn't be able to remember her now anyway, she found that she was able to start her walk down the street with a newfound confidence.

It was a beautiful day out. The sun was high, and there were only a few white, fluffy clouds in the blue sky. Ana had to shield her eyes, not being used to that much natural light anymore. She didn't have a destination in mind, so she just walked, finding herself in the downtown area after a while. She considered going into the drug store to get herself some sunglasses, now that she might actually be needing them, but she could only get as far as standing in front of the door and staring in. A couple with a small child were staring back, obviously thinking she was intending to do something malicious, but it barely registered with her as she silently argued with herself. Her nerves getting the best of her, she stepped away from the shop, then headed straight home. No need for her captor to come looking for her today.

Pennywise didn't ask her about her day when he returned to the house. When she first saw him enter the sitting room, her eyes immediately found the traces of blood that he had haphazardly wiped away from his mouth, and there were bright red drops of it adorning his frilled collar. She was grateful that she hadn't somehow stumbled across him as he was stalking his prey, or worse yet, eating his meal.

"I went out today," she said as he took his usual spot next to her on the couch.

"I know," he replied, "You were outside the drug store."

The statement took her by surprise. "You were there? But I didn't sense you at all."

"No, I could smell that you had been there," he said, throwing her a small grin as she grimaced.

"I need to shower more often," she quipped, and she shivered as he placed his hand on her leg, trying to pull her even closer to him. Even with his distracting contact, she found herself wondering if the toddler she had seen through the pharmacy door had ended up being his latest conquest.

He sighed even as she was finishing the thought. "Sweet little Ana," he said, his tone starting to sound patronizing now, "If thinking about me eating upsets you so much, then why do you keep wondering about it?" He hooked an arm under both of her legs now, turning her towards him and pulling them over his lap, then wrapped both of his long arms around her torso. As he leaned forward to bury his large face in her hair, he said, "Maybe if you're so bored, you can come hunt with me, eh?"

"God, no," she said, trying to lean away from his embrace, but there was no room to move. *Who would have thought that the Eater of Worlds would be so clingy?* she thought dryly to herself.

He laughed at her response. "Pennywise expected as much." He started to nuzzle her neck, like a dog rubbing its scent on its favorite toy. "If you must know, sweet girl, Pennywise ate an adult today."

She knew he was wanting some sort of praise from her over the fact, as he knew how much his preferred diet horrified her. She stayed silent, attempting to be stubborn and not reward his slightly less terrible choice in food. But inside, she was immensely surprised at his confession, even a little bit impressed; unfortunately for her pride, he knew within seconds. Their cuddle session was interrupted by his bout of deafening laughter.

The next day, she went out again. This time, she was on a mission, and she only stood outside the drug store for a few moments before

collecting herself and bursting through the door. When she spoke to the cashier, she knew she was being awkward and speaking a little bit too loudly, as someone who hadn't interacted with a person properly in a long time might do. But she was proud of herself for following through with it. She got some groceries after that, happy to pick out her own food for a change. But she still went back to Neibolt quicker than she would have liked.

On the third day, Ana was on a different sort of mission. There was nothing she needed to buy, and there was a certain family of four she had been worrying about since the day she had seen them in the grocery store and learned that their false memories of her had disappeared. Now, that day seemed like eons ago. But she couldn't help herself, and after another agonizing round of arguing internally about what the right choice was, she found herself standing outside of Cassandra's house.

It was late afternoon, and she expected to see some movement in the cozy home. She stood on the sidewalk across the street for what seemed like an hour with no inkling of anyone inside, and she began to worry that Pennywise would come to take her home before she had to the chance to see them. If that happened, she was prepared for his potential wrath at her longing after her fake family, but she was ready for it.

As she stood in silence, staring at the house like the creepy stalker she looked like, she began to reminisce about the childhood and family that she remembered. It was only tolerable for so long before she had to push it out of her mind, because now she was sobbing on the street while staring at an empty house, and at the moment she didn't feel like having the police called on her. Then, she started to think about her real past, the family and friends she had been ripped away from, the memories she wish could recover. Her tears stopped, and now sadness was replaced by anger.

"Ana," a whisper suddenly called out of thin air. It snapped her out of her self-pity, and she looked around for the source. Her first thought was that it was Pennywise coming to bring her home and was playing a stupid little game with her, and for a moment she was angry with him for not just walking up to her and telling her it was time to go back to the house. But she quickly realized that she wasn't able to

sense him. This was something else.

She heard her name being whispered again, and now that she was listening intently for it, it sounded as though it was all around her.

"What?!" she asked furiously, irked at this point at the indirectness of it all. "What do you want?"

"Come," the voice responded mysteriously, and Ana knew who it was now. It was the Brethren. But she still didn't know what was going on. She tried to decipher whose voice it was, either the woman she had encountered several times, or the deep voice of their 'leader', but it was impossible to tell in the whispers.

"Why?" she said to nobody. She was feeling more and more like and insane person.

A few moments of silence followed. Then: "Your family is in danger. It has them."

Her heart nearly stopped. Her mind started to go wild; they were no where near home, supposedly they were in danger; had she been gone too long and Pennywise had lied when he said he wouldn't punish her for being out of the house?

She started to take off for Neibolt house, but suddenly a cloaked figure appeared in front of her, no doubt another apparition.

"No," came the woman's familiar voice. "The Barrens." Her red arm raised, pointing in the direction Ana needed to go. She ran without hesitation, heading down the street, then into the woods; every so often the apparition would reappear to point her on her way. As her feet flew beneath her, carrying her towards danger, she pleaded over and over again with Pennywise to spare them, hoping he would be able to sense it. She had gone several miles before she started to hear the trickle of water, and she burst through the last bit of trees.

The sight that greeted her was nothing like she had been picturing. Pennywise was nowhere to be seen, and she still couldn't sense him. But the picture in front of her was every bit as terrible.

Four cloaked figures stood in the water, each one of them standing

behind a kneeling member of Ana's family. Cassandra was sobbing, a black gloved hand buried deep in her hair, forcing her head back, a glistening blade held to her throat. Derek was in the same position, and there was blood trickling down his forehead like he had been knocked over the head with something. There were no weapons being held against the kids, but they were being held in place forcefully nonetheless. Both children were crying, and Ana started to cry too when she looked in their terrified faces.

"What is this?" Ana managed to get out, now her voice barely a whisper. She heard the voice of the woman answer her; she was the one that was standing behind Ronnie, a hand wrapped around his little throat.

"You failed. You were supposed to sacrifice yourself to weaken the beast. Now we have to do it for you."

"It's not my fault," she choked out, and the figure holding Heather's hair yanked back roughly, making the little girl cry out in fear. "He knows what I am, he knows that if he eats me - " The figure yanked Heather's hair again, as if to warn her to not say the wrong thing. Ana felt her blinding fear evolving into outrage. "He can't smell my fear," she said, the shaking if her voice now gone. "There's no point to this. Let them go."

"*It* just needs a bit more...enticement," the woman replied coolly. "I guess you weren't afraid enough for your own safety. A brave trait, perhaps. But this should do the trick." The figure holding Cassandra started to cut her neck a little, and blood started to run down her skin.

"Where's your leader?" Ana seethed through clenched teeth, taking a step towards them. "Too cowardly to show himself?"

"The Great One has more important matters to attend to," a new voice said, the one holding Derek. Ana snapped her head towards him.

"All of you are nothing but fucking cowards," Ana hissed at him. In response, the woman slowly pulled down her hood, revealing a middle-aged woman with short, platinum blonde hair. She had a

sickening smile on her face as she stared at Ana. "Wasn't Maturin supposed to be some benevolent creator? Why would you do this in his name?"

Her question made the woman's smile falter slightly. "Maturin *is* the great, all-knowing, generous creator. He guided us down this path."

"From what I know, he would never have approved of this," Ana retorted. "And he's dead, you stupid cunt. Who have you been taking orders from?"

"It has been fooling you," the woman replied, although she sounded unsure of herself. "Maturin can never die!" Ana barked out a sadistic laugh, and the woman huffed at her angrily. Suddenly, she pushed Ronnie down to the water, submerging his face; Ana started towards them but stopped when the one holding Heather started to do the same. Ronnie was let up a few seconds later, sputtering and coughing up water, although it seemed like he was under for eternity. Cassandra was now shrieking for her children, even with the blade pressing harder into her throat.

Ana was beginning to panic, to wonder how she could possibly get them out of this, when she felt a sudden wave of calm wash over her. Her mind instantly slowed down; she knew this had been the Brethren's plan all along, to get Pennywise to come here and then finally eat her when she was a scared puddle over her family's safety. But she had a different idea as to how this was going to play out.

She watched the cloaked woman's face turn from unsure to cocky, and Ana turned to see that half of Pennywise's face was now sticking up from the water, as if his incredibly tall frame was somehow still submerged in the shallow water. His orange hair was soaking wet, plastered to his white face as he looked at the people in front of him.

Ana's anger increased tenfold as she stared into the woman's arrogant face. "You have no fucking idea, you evil bitch," Ana growled at her. The expression wavered on the blonde woman's face as Pennywise started to gracefully float up from the water next to Ana. She had little else going through her mind just then, except she wanted them all dead.

She heard Pennywise sniff the air, and Ana turned her head slightly, looking into his golden eyes rimmed with red, then giving him the slightest smile. She turned back to look at the woman's face just in time to see the absolute terror etched on her face.

His gloved hands sprouted long, black claws as he glowered at the group in front of him. The Brethren began to scatter, releasing their grip on the hostage family members, likely knowing that using them as bargaining chips against the Eater of Worlds was a lost cause.

He rushed towards them in a bellowing, pulsating blur of teeth and claws; seconds later, Ana saw blood spurting and hitting the water as he dismembered one of the cloaked figures. Pulling herself away from the satisfying sight, she ran towards the family that now were scrambling to get out of the water and away from all of it. She helped a tripping Heather get onto shore, and was urging them to run, when she saw the blonde woman trying to escape into the sewers.

Pennywise was killing his second Brethren member as Ana took off for the woman. Her rage and adrenaline pumping through her veins, she caught up to the blonde bitch, who was tripping over the length of her cloak. Ana had her cornered against a grate, and she approached her slowly, a small part of her wondering if she was capable of what she was wanting so badly to do.

"The beast has corrupted you," the woman seethed, struggling to catch her breath.

"If I'm corrupted," Ana replied, her voice even and collected, "It's because of what *you* did to me," she said. The woman made a dash to get around Ana, but she tackled her down into the grey water. Her anger gave her strength she didn't know she had as she pinned the woman down with her knees and wrapped her hands around her throat, choking the life out of her as she held her face under the water.

When she was sure she was dead, Ana took a few moments to catch her breath. She held her hand over her heart, feeling it pound against her chest in a satisfying rhythm. Then, she stood up, grabbing onto the fresh corpse's foot so she could drag her back out to the open water.

As she approached the exit of the sewer, she expected to see a blood bath, and indeed, that was part of what she saw; there were floating body parts everywhere, and the water was stained a deep red. But what she didn't expect was to see Pennywise standing at the shore, a few feet away from Ronnie, who was paralyzed in terror, backed up against a large tree as the clown stared at him. The rest of the family was in the woods nearby, huddled together, unsure how to help the small boy.

"Pennywise," Ana breathed, dropping the foot of the dead woman and moving as fast as she could towards them. "Please, *please* don't hurt him!" She reached his tall form, grabbed his arm to try to get his attention, and he instantly threw her away from him as if he didn't want to deal with her right then. From the ground, she was able to see his face then, and he was staring, unblinking at the cowering boy, his many rows of teeth starting to emerge from his red lips, drool dripping down in a puddle. His shoulders were hunched forward and he was breathing heavily, as if he were fighting his primal urge to attack. She knew the boy's fear must have been intoxicating right then, with all of the Brethren members now dead.

"Please," she pleaded again. His glare didn't waver. Cassandra shrieked suddenly, calling out for her son, and Pennywise turned his attention towards her then, letting out a loud roar as if to tell her to shut up. It seemed that time stood still then. No one moved, no one said anything. Ana was debating trying to throw herself between the clown and the boy, scared that it would only spark some reaction from Pennywise. Then suddenly, he let out a growl of anguish as he abruptly turned away from them, stalking off towards the water again.

"Go," Ana said, rushing towards Ronnie and grabbing his arm to yank him away from the tree. "All of you, get out of here!" She ushered the family into the woods. "I'll catch up to you," she called, and Derek turned to nod at her, Heather clutched safely in his arms.

Ana turned to go back to the water. She found Pennywise bent down to the surface, sifting through the red with his clawed hands as if he were searching for something. He caught the arm of the woman Ana had strangled, and started to drag her back towards the sewers.

"I'll be back soon," Ana said, and he turned to look at her, his features still wild with hunger as his eyes met hers. He gave her a grunt to let her know he had heard her, and then turned back towards the sewers, body in hand.

Ana easily caught up to her pseudo family, as they were not able to move quickly with the children in tow. They didn't speak as they trekked the woods, and then Cassandra finally managed to talk as they went down the road towards their home.

"What was that?" she asked quietly, Ronnie wrapped in her arms.

"I don't know," Ana lied. She knew it was no use trying to explain any of it. They'd probably forget in the next few days. "They looked like a cult or something."

"That was a scary clown," Ronnie piped up. "I don't like clowns."

"I don't blame you, buddy," Ana replied. She was thrilled that everyone was safe, and yet it was disheartening to be in their presence again, knowing that they had no clue who she was.

They reached the family's house finally, going at a slow pace for the children's sake. Ana had every intention of leaving them to themselves, knowing they were going to be fine, and uttered a general 'Bye' and 'Take care', before turning to head back to her own house. She was caught off guard when she felt a small hand tug at her pant leg. Heather was looking up at her with those big, beautiful eyes, and then gestured for Ana to bend down towards her. Ana complied, and the little girl wrapped her arms around her neck for a tight hug, making Ana's heart melt. When Heather was done, she ran back to her father, and Ronnie came up to her to do the same. As she headed back to Neibolt, her heart was soaring.

As she crossed the threshold and stepped into the entryway, she immediately knew that Pennywise wasn't there. She guessed he was still somewhere down in the sewers, and perhaps he hadn't taken the time to drag the bodies all the way back to his dungeon below the house. She was exhausted, but all she could do was move from room to room, looking for something to occupy her time, then resorted to pacing in the kitchen.

It was well into the night, many hours later, when Pennywise finally came back to the house. Ana was in the bathtub when she sensed him, biting her lip as she contemplated her next move. She half expected him to enter the bathroom to see her, but when he didn't, she got out of the tub, quickly drying herself off before heading to the bedroom. She didn't bother to find clothes to put on, merely wrapping the towel around her as she walked.

She entered the bedroom to find him sitting on the edge of the bed, no trace of blood anywhere on his painted face or costume. Neither of them spoke when they laid eyes on each other.

Before he could start in with some sort of petty mockery of her current lack of clothing, Ana crossed the room over to him, letting the towel fall to the floor in a heap. She climbed onto his lap, her knees resting on the bed on either side of his legs, and wrapped her arms around his neck. Her blue eyes met his golden ones for a few moments, and then she kissed his ruby red lips, tenderly at first, then with more intensity. She felt his erection pressing through his pants and into her thigh, and she started to grind her hips lightly, causing him to growl deep in his throat.

Ana threw her head back, inviting him to nibble and suck on her breasts. When he complied, she reached down to his pants, sneaking a hand under the waistband to grip his erection tightly. She heard him hiss as she stroked him, and then she freed his pale member from its confinement. She lowered herself onto him, his cock sliding into her wetness with ease, and they both moaned in pleasure. As Ana started to move up and down, Pennywise grabbed her hair, pulling her head back again so he could graze her neck with his teeth.

His numerous rows of razor-like teeth started to make their appearance, and his hands were turning back into the claws that he had used to slash at the people who had threatened his sweet girl. He was in ecstasy at the sensation of Ana riding him while she was in his lap, but the animal in him was starting to crave a faster pace now. He gripped her hips, careful not to puncture her skin, and pulled her off him in a swift motion, then flipped her onto the bed so her belly was on the mattress. He climbed on top of her, pulling her hips up to meet his own, and then entered her again. His thrusting was fast and hard, but Ana knew he was still in control. He started to lightly drag

his claws down her back, and she loved every second of it. She came quickly while being mounted like that, and he finished soon after with a loud growl.

They rested briefly after, Ana still lying face down on the bed, Pennywise next to her with his arm draped lazily on her back. When she replayed the images of him rushing forward to attack those cloaked figures that had wronged her in so many ways, she found herself climbing on top of him again.

16. Chapter 16

Before the incident with the monks, it had seemed to Ana like she and Pennywise were stuck in their own little reality, just the two of them going about their business in the shabby old house. After, it was almost like the rest of the world had never existed. Ana didn't really care what was going on outside their domicile, as she was too wrapped up in their near constant copulating. Even Pennywise missed a few days of going out to hunt over the next few weeks. It was only when Ana had completely run out of food and hadn't eaten for a day and a half that she forced herself to venture out into Derry again. Even then, it was a quick trip to the grocery store with Robert, who couldn't keep his hands off her the entire time, and it was back to the house to hastily drop the bag of groceries in the front hallway and start groping each other.

For the first time since Ana had learned about her true origins, she felt content. She no longer tortured herself with the idea that there were memories of her former dimension that she would never get to remember, or that the memories she did have were completely fake. This was her existence now. It might not have been productive or purposeful, but it was satisfying in the sense that she had no feeling of burden on her shoulders any longer. As long as she didn't think about what Pennywise was doing when he left to go down to the sewers, she was appeased.

Now that the two of them were nearly always on the same page, there was little spoken between them. Pennywise had never been much of a conversationalist outside of tormenting and arguing with her, although sometimes he seemed to go out of his way to aggravate her just because their squabbling was fun to him; besides, it usually led to a more heated romp in the bedroom. Like before, Ana had no idea how much time had actually passed by the time she stopped to think about it.

Her first real sense of apprehension that she had felt in a long while came one night when they were on the couch together. They were watching one of the many *Saw* movies, a series that Pennywise had pretty much insisted they watch over and over again once he had

discovered them. He was sitting upright on the couch, Ana with her upper body and head nestled in his lap.

There was the sound of a chainsaw and a man screaming coming from the television, and Ana wasn't particularly paying attention, having had seen these movies so many times at her companion's request. He let out a high-pitched giggle at the character's anguish, and Ana couldn't help but roll her eyes a little at his delight. She had something else on her mind as the movie went on, and she ran a hand slowly over the bulge in his silk pants.

"Naughty girl," he said in a low voice, a drop of glistening saliva visible on his bottom lip, "trying to distract me again?"

She looked up at him from his lap, letting her hand continue to lazily move back and forth over his package. "If you want, I can leave you to your movie," she teased, starting to sit up, but he quickly grasped a chunk of hair at the back of her head, gently pushing her back down to her original spot. This time, it was her turn to giggle quietly as she slipped a hand into his pants, pulling his erect shaft out of the smooth material. She started to put him in her mouth, and he let out a long hiss at her warm touch.

She decided to make a game out of it. When she started, she glanced up at his face to find him still watching the screen. It spurred her on more, increasing her intensity, deciding she would win if she could get him to look away from the gory movie. Of course, Pennywise knew her little plan in no time, making it an even harder challenge for her. Finally, when she took him as deep as she possibly could manage, the clown closed his eyes and threw his head back in pure bliss.

After he finished and they were done with their little power play, was when the small dose of reality struck them both for the first time in a while. Pennywise's head suddenly snapped to attention to look towards the window as if he had seen something, alarming Ana and making her sit up to see what was going on. Before she could ask anything, Pennywise had stood and was starting to leave the room.

"Hey - " she exclaimed, but he was gone before she could get anything else out. She could sense he had left the house, adding to

her confusion at his hurried exit. Ana never liked it when he was gone anymore. Even as time went on, the overwhelming restlessness she experienced when Pennywise wasn't near her never wavered, and she had formed the extremely bad habit of basically going to the basement to sit and stare at the well until he got back. She knew it was pathetic and destructive to her independence, but at this point she didn't care.

For the first hour or so, she tried to read. When she realized she was reading the same sentence over and over and still wasn't comprehending it, she started to sweep the kitchen floor, but abandoned the task part way through. Throwing the broom down on the ground, she stomped up the stairs, intending to try to get some sleep since it was so late. She cursed Pennywise silently, finding his sudden and unexplained departure rude, not that the clown was all that polite most of the time. She crawled under the covers, lying there awake for only a few minutes, and then proceeded to her usual spot in the basement.

Finally, she could tell he was coming back, probably down in the sewers and heading towards the house. Not wanting to be ridiculed cruelly yet again for her apparent neediness, she went back upstairs, sitting on the couch with the forgotten book in her hands as though she had been calmly reading the entire time.

Pennywise entered the room. Ana glanced at him quickly, then moved her eyes back down to the page open in front of her. She noticed she was holding the book upside down.

She hoped he was going to offer and explanation, and when he didn't, she closed the book and tossed it aside with a sigh. "What was that about?" she asked, and he gave her his signature grin.

"Did ya miss me?" he growled playfully, then started to laugh when she folded her arms over her chest.

"Do we always have to do this? Just answer me."

"Say it!"

"Say what?" she replied defiantly, knowing exactly what he was

getting at. His grin turned into an over-dramatic, mocking pout.

"Why is Ana so mean?" he said, fake sadness in his voice. "Maybe she doesn't want to know what Pennywise was doing?"

"Maybe I don't," she replied stubbornly, and she stood, intending to walk past him and go upstairs. Before she could cross the threshold of the room, he grabbed her shoulders and pushed her up against the wall, bending down so his face was inches from hers.

"You're lying," he purred. "You want to know, so *so badly!*" He kept his forearm pushed across her collarbone to hold her in place, letting his other hand dance tantalizingly down her belly, coming to rest between her legs. She let out a soft moan, his touch distracting her from what she had been so worried about just a few moments ago. She closed her eyes, taking in the delicious sensation of his fingers caressing her over her clothes, and suddenly, it was gone. He released his hold on her, starting to walk out of the room again. This time, she followed closely.

"Fucking clown," she muttered under her breath, not the first and definitely not the last time she would use the phrase. She followed him up the stairs.

"Will you please tell me?" she asked exasperatedly, and he didn't answer. Finally, she decided to give in. "Okay, fine, *I missed you.*"

They were in the hall near the bedroom, a place they had spent an inordinate amount of time in as of late, and he suddenly turned on his heel to face her.

"Good girl," he said. "Why is it so hard for you to admit it?"

Ana was grinding her teeth at this point, her annoyance of him overtaking her curiosity. "Always with the games."

"You won the last one, it's only fair that I get to win this time!" he said, giggling, and Ana couldn't help but laugh too, remembering how she had 'won' with her blowjob not that long ago. As she was still laughing, Pennywise scooped her up, bringing her into the bedroom and dropping her unceremoniously on the bed.

"Seriously, now," she said, rolling on her side to face him as she spoke, "what caught your attention like that?"

"There's another cosmic entity in our little town of Derry," he said, taking a small jump and landing on his back on the bed next to her.

"What? How can that be?" Ana asked, absolutely taken aback. She hadn't known what to expect, but it wasn't that.

"He was near the house, trying to watch us," Pennywise continued, casually folding his hands over his chest and crossing his legs as he spoke, "He knew as soon as I could sense him and took off. I followed him for a while so I could read his little mind."

He stopped talking, Ana raising her eyebrows at him, expecting him to continue. She always had to keep his talking flowing as if he didn't know how to properly converse unless he was trying to annoy her.

"And?" she asked, and it was like a light switched back on in his mind.

"Our new little friend was masquerading as the 'leader' of the stupid monks that I - " he cleared his throat, turning to give her a devilish little look, "*We* killed. Pretending to take orders from the dead space turtle and relay it to them, so they'd do whatever he said."

Ana was shocked. "So he was the one who 'bound' me, or whatever you call it?"

"Seems like it!" he said, and then he turned on his side to face her. "Now, let's get back to one of our fun games!"

"Hold on!" Ana said, pushing herself up and going to sit cross-legged in front of him to discourage any advances, as she wanted to keep them on the subject, "So that means he's still out there? He's still wanting to weaken you and kill you?"

Pennywise shrugged at her. "I guess."

"You guess?" Ana asked, and she absentmindedly slapped his gloved hand away as it traveled sneakily up her thigh. "Isn't that a reason for concern?"

He scoffed at her. "It's nothing to get all upset about, sweet girl," he said, this time actually pouting a little at her denial. "He's pretty much an infant as far as beings from the Macroverse go."

"How do you know that?"

"He was created out of Maturin's death," he said, as if that were a proper explanation.

"What?"

He sighed then, clearly becoming annoyed with her unending inquiries. "This universe, and the one you're from, were made when the turtle had a stomachache and belched them up."

Ana snorted at his statement. "That's absurd."

But Pennywise pressed on, as if trying to teach a preschooler a simple concept. "Sometimes he created things on purpose. Sometimes not. When he died, he released his bowels, as dead things do, and made this new entity."

She stared at him in disbelief before asking slowly, "So...you're saying Maturin farted him into existence?"

"Not on purpose."

She held back her gut reaction, which was to burst out laughing. She didn't need to sidetrack Pennywise now. "So this new thing is like you?"

Pennywise laughed at her question, his hand going back to rest on her knee and give it a playful squeeze. "No, not like me, you silly girl! There's nothing out there like me!"

"Is he evil?" she asked, and she immediately regretted asking that, as his laughter died in an instant, his eyes narrowing to glare at her.

"I supposed *you* would think so."

"Okay, okay, that's not the point," Ana said, doing her best to digress, making a mental note not to ever refer to Pennywise as evil in case it

would set him off, then hoping he didn't catch that thought. "But again, I ask: it doesn't worry you that he wants to kill you?"

"Does the shark worry that a minnow wants to kill him?" he retorted in a hiss. She knew she needed to wrap this up quickly or deal with a pissed off clown, but she couldn't help herself.

"But he obviously has some power to him, or he wouldn't have been able to bring me here and make me human," she pointed out, "And he made all those fake memories - "

"That didn't hold up, or your little 'family' would still know who you are," he said, cutting her off, his agitation mounting.

"Thanks for pointing that out," she snapped, getting as pissed off as he was; she started to uncross her legs to get up from the bed, but he shot a hand out to grab her leg, yanking her down. He was on top of her in a second, his hand on her neck as he inched his face closer and closer to hers.

"Don't fret, little girl," his gravelly voice drawled, "Pennywise will protect you." He kissed her, knowing that in a few seconds he'd be able to make all her silly little worries melt away.

A few days passed, and Ana was still worried about some evil cosmic power coming after them. Pennywise had to continually reassure her, and she was grateful that even though he was clearly fed up with it, he kept humoring her. She never wanted to say it, but she was convinced that he was again being overconfident in his own power. She hoped the other entity was just as cocky as he was, or he might be able to find away to actually weaken Pennywise without using her.

Then of course, came the guilt from worrying about the well-being of a child-eating monster. It only lasted for a split second, however; her reality was so wrapped up in him at this point, she didn't entertain the idea of hoping that the new entity would succeed. As far as she was concerned, she had no one else, so she had every right to worry about him.

They continued on with their lives, every day bringing them closer to

the time when Pennywise would need to start his long rest. Ana was at the point that she almost believed him when he said that they were completely safe from whatever plans the baby demon had in store, when something else unusual took place.

Ana was eating her dinner while sitting at the kitchen table, and Pennywise had just returned home. They were caught up in some meaningless argument about Ana's unwillingness to try eating raw beef, as it would be an entertaining and satisfying thing for him to see, when he suddenly snapped to attention again, exactly like the night when he left without warning. He started to leave without saying anything, just like before, but Ana stood and caught his arm.

"Is it him?" she asked, and he nodded.

"I'm going to follow him," he said, and she let his arm go, knowing she wouldn't be able to stop him anyway. He was gone in an instant, leaving her to pace down in the basement again. She hated that this thing was making an appearance near the house again, and part of her wished that she was still dealing with the Brethren members instead. Yes, they were unsettling, but at least they were humans just doing his bidding under false pretenses.

She startled when she heard a knock at the door. As far as she knew, people passing by the house pretty much just ignored it, whatever enchantment Pennywise placed on it erasing any desire they may have had of approaching it. She had no idea who it could possibly be.

Going up the stairs and approaching the front door slowly, she jumped again when she heard another loud knock. Ironic that she'd be scared of someone coming to visit rather than the shape-shifter she lived with, she thought to herself as she tried to get a look out the window without being noticed. As she peered through the curtains, she caught a familiar sight, and then flew to open the front door.

"Mike!" she cried as she opened the door. He was standing there, a backpack slung over his shoulder, looking as surprised to see her as she was to see him. "What are you doing here?"

He looked her up in down. "Same to you!" he said, then stepping into

the house without an invitation. "How is this house still here? And it looks...better."

"Oh you know, magic and all that," she said, not knowing how else to explain it.

"So It fooled us after all," Mike replied quietly, continuing to look around he entryway. "I didn't believe it at first."

"Why did you come back to Derry?" she asked, still shocked to see him.

"I was worried about you," he said, "I looked up your sister in the phone book and gave her a call, and when she didn't know who I was talking about..."

Ana nodded in understanding. "Mike, I'm so sorry. You never should have come back here, it's not safe for you."

"But I can get you out of here," he said, grabbing her hand gently and trying to pull her towards the front door. "Let's go, get away while It's gone and we still have a chance."

"Oh, Mike," she said apologetically. "Don't think I'm not grateful for you coming back here, but I can't leave, I just can't - "

"Aren't you It's prisoner?" he asked, disbelief etched on his features.

"It's not that simple. I made a deal to keep the kids safe, and if I leave - " she stopped talking abruptly, something coming to realization. "Mike," she said quietly, taking a step back from him, "How did you know Pennywise wasn't here?"

Mike shook his head. "It doesn't matter right now. We have to go!"

"No," she said, wishing she had some sort of weapon on her. She'd never feared the possibility of defending herself while in the house like this. "*You* have to go. If he comes back while you're here, I can't protect you."

"He said you might resist," Mike muttered under his breath so quietly that Ana barely caught it. She backed away from him again, then

turned to run, but he caught her easily, pulling her towards him and wrapping an arm around her neck to choke her. She beat her hands on his arms, trying to free herself, but her small frame was no match for him. "I'm sorry," he said quietly as Ana started to lose consciousness.

She started to come to a few times, fighting to try to stay awake, her head throbbing as she attempted to keep her eyes open. From what she could tell, she was lying in the backseat of a car. Then, Mike's blurry face appeared above her.

"I'm sorry," he said again, and she felt something sharp slice her arm open. The pain made her pass out again, the darkness around her leaving her blissfully unaware.

17. Chapter 17

While lying in the back of a car in her state of unconsciousness, Ana started to dream. It was one of those sequences where even while you're experiencing it and it all seems so real, there's still a small part of you that thinks it can't be because of just how ridiculous it is.

Right now, in her euphoric little dream land, Ana was seated in a row boat surrounded by crystal blue water, the sun high in the sky and not a worry in her mind. She was looking down to watch some fish that were lazily swimming around the boat, the water so clear that she could nearly see the bottom of the lake that she was so carelessly drifting around in.

"I wish I had some bread so I could feed them," she said, still watching the happy little fish as they danced around, and she wiggled some fingers near the surface to draw them to her.

"No bread," came a raspy voice, and she looked up to see Pennywise the Dancing Clown seated across from her, an oar in each hand. "But I have cotton candy!"

Ana smiled when she saw him. "That won't work. It will disappear as soon as it hits the water."

The clown frowned at her. "How about some leftover meat?" He let go of an oar, then reached behind his back to grab something. When his hand reappeared again, he was showing her a fistful of some sort of mangled carcass, blood starting to drip off his formerly white glove and onto the bottom of the boat.

Ana wrinkled her nose at the gruesome sight. "What kind is it?"

"It's leftover monk," he said, starting to giggle, and Ana laughed too. "I have a present for you!" he said, brandishing the flesh at her. She reached her hand in without hesitation, the blood starting to stain her skin, and dug around for a moment. It was warm and squishy, although not all that unpleasant of a feeling. Then, her searching fingers felt something solid, and she plucked it out. It was a ring, the diamond on it so large that it was the very definition of looking like

it came from a bubblegum machine.

Ana gasped, sliding it on her ring finger, the ring starting to drip the blood down that hand as well. "Penny, you shouldn't have!" she exclaimed, rushing forward to hug the clown's tall frame. He dropped the meat on the floor of the boat so he could properly return the embrace, and it landed with a distinct squelching noise. Neither of them noticed.

"But," Ana said, pulling away a bit to look into his eyes, "Did you ask permission first? Talk to my family?"

Pennywise looked at her, confused at her question. "But who do I ask?"

Ana, feeling a bit confused herself now, started to look around the boat. When she was sure there was no one else, she sighed. "I suppose you're right. There's only you."

"Then everything's the way it should be!" Pennywise said gleefully, clapping his hands together; some of the blood sprayed and hit Ana in the face. "Just one more thing," he added, pointing down. Ana turned and looked to see Mike lying on the bottom of the boat, duct tape over his mouth and his hands and feet bound together. He was struggling against the restraints, trying to scream, but the duct tape was muffling the majority of it out.

"Oh yeah, I almost forgot," Ana said, and she moved to stand by his legs. She and Pennywise bent down, she grabbing his legs, and he grasping his shoulders; in unison, they heaved him over the side and he hit the water with a loud splash.

"Three's a crowd," she said quietly as she watched his body start to sink to the bottom. Pennywise stood by her side, wrapping an arm around her shoulders to watch with her, a giggle escaping his scarlet lips.

Then, she felt a sudden, sharp pain on her forehead. She went to place her hand there, and her eyes were starting to flutter open. From what she could see, her current environment was nothing like her peculiar dream sequence; it was dark, and the only light she could

see was from a flashlight that seemed to be waving around erratically. She could make out the silhouettes of some tall evergreen trees around her.

"Ow," she groaned, her head rubbing the throbbing spot on her head.

"Sorry," came a low, soft voice, "I must have bumped your head trying to get you out from the car."

The first thing Ana did was glance down at her left hand. Nope, no gaudy ring there. The second, was to try to plant her feet on solid ground, but she soon discovered her legs were dangling midair.

She turned her head to see that her face was uncomfortably close to Mike's, and then little by little she realized that he was carrying her, much like the way Pennywise liked to do in Neibolt house. Her head still spinning, she tried to form words, the first attempt just a few incoherent mumbles.

"What, Ana?" Mike asked worriedly as he navigated through the forest, trying not to stumble on any exposed tree roots.

"I said, don't touch his things," she repeated, this time clear enough for him to understand.

"We won' t have to worry about him much longer," Mike replied cryptically, and Ana's mind was really starting to clear at that point.

"Mike," she said, glancing down at the arm that had been sliced open earlier, seeing that there was only dried blood there now, "What in the flying fuck is going on?" Before she gave him a chance to respond, she started to struggle in his grasp, and he reluctantly put her down. She stumbled a bit, then stood as straight as she could, her leg muscles aching from being cramped in the car for an unknown amount of time.

"I'm taking you to a sacred spot," he said, offering his hand to help steady her, but she ignored it.

"For what?"

"It's important that we get there. If we don't start the ritual soon - "

"Mike," Ana started, the anger in her starting to boil once again, "I think you and rituals need to take a break for a while."

"I know this is confusing, and he said that you'd probably be angry, but Ana, I need you to see how important this is," he said, his voice pleading.

"Who?" Ana huffed, starting to look around and try to see which way the car was.

"The brethren leader. He said if we can get you to the spot, and start the ritual, we might be able to finally kill It."

"Oh, God," Ana said, her heart dropping at his words, "He fooled you too. Mike, he's not some well intentioned, God-fearing warlock, he's a demon!"

"I know you *think* that, Ana, but listen to me, It has brainwashed you. It knows that if we can channel your power properly, then we actually have a shot at killing him."

"Fuck," Ana whispered, knowing they were gridlocked in their argument. She was unsteady on her feet, and the trees around her were still spinning intermittently, but she knew she had to try to get out of there before he overpowered her again.

She didn't wait for him to get another chance to grab her. She ran.

For a few moments, it seemed luck was on her side; she was navigating the moonlit forest without tripping or smacking into a tree right away. She hadn't been sure where the car was at this point, but she didn't care. Getting away from him was what she needed to do, and being lost in the forest was something she'd have to worry about later.

Ana heard Mike calling for her as she ran, knowing he was close, but still behind her. That's why she was caught completely off guard when she collided with someone in front of her. She had hit the unknown person so hard that she bounced off it and fell backward onto the ground. The impact hadn't seemed to disturb the figure one bit.

"Foolish girl," came the figure's deep voice, and she knew instantly it was the evil entity, the one she had spoken to briefly after being shown her true self. "There's no use trying to run anymore."

Mike had caught up to them, struggling to catch his breath once he stopped running. "I'm sorry, Asmod, I was prepared for her to resist, but - "

"Don't bother apologizing," the cloaked figure drawled. "This one has been a nuisance from the beginning. She even helped the beast to kill my brethren members."

If it there had been more light, Ana knew she would have seen the broken look on Mike's face as he studied her. A very minuscule part of her cared what the man thought of her. The rest of her was just pissed.

"Ana," Mike said, his voice almost a whisper, "Is that true?"

"Damn right," she hissed, and Asmod suddenly shoved her roughly towards Mike.

"If she runs again, knock her out," he commanded. Mike tightly grasped her arm, forcing her to walk with him.

"If you're so powerful, why don't you do it?" she asked. She was playing with fire, she knew. "You have to be the most lazy, entitled piece of shit - "

"*Ana,"* Mike scolded, obviously trying to shut her up and keep her out of trouble. She was starting to feel sorry for him, for being completely manipulated like this. For his sake, she decided to keep quiet as they walked.

It seemed like an hour or so of trenching through the woods, and they reached a clearing in the trees. It was a large, circular area that had been completely cleared, and in the center was a boulder approximately the size of a car. As Mike pushed Ana towards it and the beam from the flashlight hit it a few times, she saw that the top of it was flat.

"Let me guess, that's for me?" she asked, malice dripping in her voice.

"Yes," Mike replied. "Ana, just please, I'm begging you to cooperate. I know you aren't in your right state of mind, but you're the key to stopping It. This needs to happen."

"Mike," Ana said sharply, glaring at the man as he continued to painfully grip her arm. "I know *you* aren't in your right state of mind. So let me explain this to you. Ass-mond - "

"Asmod," he corrected, rather politely.

"Whatever. He's fucking evil. And the *only* way I can weaken Pennywise is if he kills me and eats me, which he knows about, and the last time these fuckers tried it, they all got brutally murdered. So maybe you should stop what you're doing and get out of here, because there's no way in hell he isn't going to track me and kick some ass for all of this." She was able to finish her little speech with no interference from the cloaked alien. As she looked around, she couldn't see him anywhere.

Mike didn't respond, just pushed her towards the large rock, and then heaved her up onto it. She sat on it cross-legged, and nothing happened. It seemed like minutes had passed, and her aggravation was getting the best of her again.

"So what, am I supposed to do some little chant, or maybe dance for you - " She was cut off suddenly by a hand gripping her throat, and she looked down to see a scaled arm attached to it. For the first time, she saw the face of the thing that had ripped her from her home, as his hood had fallen back, and the first thing she noticed was how ugly it was. His entire face was covered in thick, brown scales, much like a lizard, and he had little sharp horns sprouting from his forehead and cheeks. His yellow eyes had vertical slits for pupils, ones that glowed in the dark of the night as he glared at her.

"Don't worry, little fairy," he seethed as he choked her, "I'm counting on the beast tracking you here eventually. I had Mike retrieve your blood so I could spread it around town while he drove you here. A temporary guise, maybe, but enough to buy me time."

When he was done talking, he suddenly opened his mouth, raising his head towards the clear night sky. An orange, swirling light suddenly

burst from his orifice and up past the trees. There was a loud crack that sounded a lot like thunder, and for a few moments, nothing seemed to happen. Then, a bright white light suddenly came crashing down from the heavens, hitting Ana and the boulder with a sickening shudder. She felt her whole body start to tingle, the light appearing to absorb into her body.

Asmod let go of her then, taking a few steps back to watch, his features drawn into an arrogant smile. Ana tried to move, but was held in place by the sheer force the light hitting her. All she could move was her eyes.

"I found a way to give you more of your original essence," he said. "I had to sacrifice a lot once again to do it, but if it makes you more appetizing, then it's all necessary, isn't it?"

"Wait," came Mike's worried voice, and Ana looked over at him, worried for his safety now that Asmod was starting to reveal his real intentions. He was standing about ten feet away from the demon, not nearly far enough away to be out of harm's way. "What did you sacrifice?"

"Well, it wasn't much of a sacrifice for *me*," he said in his low timbre, and for the first time, Ana heard him chuckle a bit. "I had to bleed out about twenty or so younglings to get this power."

"You're no better than It!" Mike said, starting to shout, Ana kept thinking, *Run!* But he stood rooted to his spot.

"Oh, I'm much *better* than the beast," Asmod said, turning his attentions towards Mike. The white light suddenly stopped streaming from the sky, and Ana was released from her invisible bonds. She fell on her side, trying to catch her breath; she was horrified when she looked down at her arm, seeing that the skin was glowing brightly and had a sparkling sheen to it. It disappeared in a few seconds, her color going back to normal, but she knew the damage was done. "His ambitions are small, pathetic. He only serves his immediate desires, which haven't changed in billions of years. But I, the Great One, have much bigger ambitions. Once the beast is gone, I will be able to rise up to full power, and then you'll all really see how much *better* I am."

"You'll take It's power once It's dead?" Mike asked in disbelief.

"No, no. The Macroverse and all these little dimensions demand balance, you see. I was not the only that was created out of Maturin's demise, but only one of us of a...*particular* persuasion - "

"You mean evil," Mike said, glaring at the lizard-man.

"Your viewpoint is narrow," Asmod retorted. "But yes, only one of us can realize our full potential at a time. With the beast alive, I am limited."

Ana glared at him, her strength letting her find her voice again. "I wonder what your plans are? Take over the universe? Enslave all the humans?"

The scaled face turned towards her, obviously irked that she was able to talk again. "I'll destroy all the humans. Their enslavement wouldn't be nearly interesting as say, a certain home planet of yours? You see, the humans can be just as wicked as I, can't they? Not nearly as fun as the innocent, devout, little pixies." He looked her up and down, like a teenage bully might do before administering a gut-wrenching insult. "I was just going to take one of you randomly. But I saw you, and oh, it was much too tempting not to take the temple master's daughter. You were so dispirited, so convinced you'd never be pure and decent enough to earn your wings, never be pious enough in Daddy's eyes."

Ana glared at him, the bombardment of information silencing her, but not lessening her loathing for the creature in front of her.

"And how perfect was it, to take you and bring you here, making you the *righteous* little human that you are now." He looked over at Mike, who looked as flabbergasted as Ana felt just then. "Does he know? That you fornicate with the beast, that you enjoy it?"

Mike looked at her then, like she had slapped him in the face.

"What does he think of you now?" Asmod continued cruelly, his revelations unrelenting. "Better yet, what would Daddy think if he ever knew?"

Ana closed her eyes, hoping desperately that the demon wouldn't be able to see the anguish on her face in the moonlight. When she opened them, she said, "Pennywise is going to kill you."

Asmod closed his eyes at her words, and at first Ana thought she had annoyed him so much that had needed to take a moment to himself, when she felt him. Pennywise was coming, and he knew it as well.

"Get her down from the rock," Asmod commanded.

"I'm not taking any more orders from you!" Mike yelled angrily, but Ana frantically motioned for him to come over to her. He helped her jump down quickly.

"Ana, I am so, so sorry about all of this."

"Nevermind, Mike, just get out of here!" she said, pushing him. "There's no need for you to die, too."

Mike looked her up and down slowly. "But...if this ritual worked..."

"Then there's no stopping him killing me, trust me," she said. He still stood there, refusing to move.

"If It kills you, then there's a chance I can stop him when he's weak," he said quietly, and time seemed to slow down then. Mike reached into his pants pocket, revealing a small jar that seemed to be holding a thick, red liquid. He unscrewed it as fast as he could, tossing it unceremoniously on Ana's face and chest.

She gasped at the sensation of the blood hitting her, and she looked up at Mike in horror. She heard the deep cackling from Asmod start up again.

"Blood from some of those scared little kiddies I had to murder for your cause," he said, a smug smile on his face. "Just a little condiment I *know* It'll enjoy." Then, she saw the yellow eyes land on something further away, and his grin grew even wider.

Ana turned around to see Pennywise standing at the edge of the trees, his costume glistening in what little light bounced off it. His golden eyes were locked on her, his head bent forward, his shoulders and

chest heaving the same way they had when he was fighting the urge to kill Ronnie.

"Oh shit," Mike said under his breath.

"Fuck you," Ana hissed back. Her first urge was to run. But she knew it was no use at this point. She stayed planted in her spot, hoping by some miracle that he'd be able to think logically through all of the tempting smells he was experiencing.

Seconds passed, but they felt like hours as he stared at her. Then, the teeth started to emerge from his mouth.

"Pennywise?" Ana whispered, wanting to make more of a point, but her fear was taking over. All of a sudden, he was gone.

"Where the hell - " Mike started to say, and then he was screaming and flying through the air. Pennywise had appeared next to him and sent him flying with what seemed to be a mere flick of his wrist. He hit the side of the tree and rolled to the ground. Ana barely had time to strain her eyes to see if he looked okay when Pennywise was behind her. She heard his heavy breathing in her ear, warm drool dripping down the side of her face and neck.

"Please," she whispered, closing her eyes. All that answered his was strained breaths.

She heard a deep voice chuckle then. "Yes, savage beast. Do what you've wanted to for so long. She's right here, ripe for the picking."

Ana hoped the other entity's tormenting would distract him a bit, pull him out of this spell he was in, make him stop a bit to think of a retort. Her heart dropped when all she heard was a growl from deep in his throat. She opened her eyes to see that Asmod was standing in front of them, looking excited as if he were child waiting for his favorite cartoon to finally start.

She heard Pennywise let out a loud growl again, and then she felt excruciating, white-hot pain shoot through her as Pennywise ripped into her shoulder with his many teeth. The force of the bite and the tearing of flesh that followed knocked her off her feet, and she tried

to crawl away from the monster that was currently chewing and swallowing her flesh. She shrieked when she felt a hand on her ankle that had started to drag her backwards, and she flipped herself on her back, trying to kick the extremity that had a grip on her.

"No!" she cried as Pennywise pulled her bleeding form closer to him, and she saw the unmistakable look of pure hunger on his features as his now reddened eyes fixed on her, unblinking. She saw drool mixed with her blood running down his chin.

She tried to free herself again, delivering a blow to his shin. He grunted in pain, then bent down to wrap a gloved hand around her neck and lift her into the air. All she could do was cry, wonder where he was going to bite her next and how long it would take for him to devour her. As he started to choke the life from her, she couldn't help but look into his wild eyes, ones that no longer housed the entity that she had gotten to used to. It was like he was gone and was replaced by a rabid animal.

Her next thought, albeit an irrational and impassioned one, was how sorry she was that he was going to die along with her.

Pennywise's body started to shift, his grip loosening slightly on her neck as his hand started to morph into some sort of brown, hairy appendage. She felt herself rising in the air as he grew taller, and his face changed from that of a clown to something much, much more terrifying. The next think Ana knew, she was staring at something that resembled the large spider she had encountered that night at the carnival, but this was a larger, alien version of it. Its face had dozens of eyes, and its mouth was wide enough to bite her body in half in one blow, hundreds of teeth taking shape similar to serrated blades. Some of the many legs sprouting from its body appeared to have claws, while others were waving like a squid's tentacle.

He was pulling her slowly towards his open, drooling mouth, and she heard Asmod's cruel laughter from down below. The creature's long, pink tongue suddenly shot out of its mouth, starting to lick up the blood that was covering her face and chest. She waited for him to chomp down on her, to deliver the killing blow.

All at once, she was hurtling through the air; the spider monster had

thrown her away, much like Pennywise had done to Mike. She hit the ground with a thud, screaming in pain as the open wound on her shoulder was scraped up against some rocks.

"Ana!" she heard Mike cry, but it barely registered as she watched the scene in front of them unfold. The spider charged Asmod with a deafening roar, ready to grab him and make him its next meal; the younger demon's small frame allowed him to dodge into the trees for a bit. Within seconds, he had reemerged back into the clearing as a large reptile-like animal, not as big as the arachnid that was after him, but still impressive in size.

Ana was starting to feel like she was going to black out once again as the two monsters crashed into each other, an obscure tangle of claws and teeth. The ground rattled around the two humans as they battled, and Mike pulled Ana into the trees just as the two tumbled near them, almost squashing them both like forgotten little bugs.

"Will you decide what side you're on already?" Ana said dryly, trying to stay awake. He eyed her with obvious concern.

"We have to get you to a hospital," he said, looking up again as a loud screeching was filling the air. "You're losing blood, and if that doesn't kill you, infection will."

"Good thing Ol' Mike is here to take care of me," she said, somewhat sarcastically, her speech starting slur like she was drunk.

"Oh my God!" Mike exclaimed then, and Ana turned around to see that the giant spider had pinned the lizard to the ground. Without hesitation, it took a large bite out of its neck, blood spraying everywhere. Asmod's monster form suddenly went limp.

"Is it over?" Ana asked, but her question was answered immediately; rotating orange lights started to emerge from the large scaly carcass, starting to ascend into the sky. The spider looked up at them, letting out a low rumble that shook the trees. It laid on the ground as if it was going to go to sleep, and then suddenly, similar lights emerged, shooting up in the air as if to chase after them. They were completely out of sight, appearing to mix in with the many stars that were out that night, and then they heard a noise almost like the cracking

thunder of a rainstorm.

"Come on, we have to go," Mike said, starting to pull Ana to her feet.

"No, no, I can't go," she said, losing her balance a bit. Mike's strong arms caught her immediately. "I have to be here when he gets back."

"Why?" he asked, looking into her eyes intently, clearly wondering if she had gone completely insane.

"Because we have a deal," Ana said. "If I'm gone, and he goes after the kids - "

"Ana, if we don't go now, you *will* die, and then he'll go after them anyway." She didn't say anything to that, but started to move her legs as he guided her along.

Even as they reached the car and started the engine, they could still hear the rumbles of the two cosmic beings fighting somewhere very far away. Ana had somehow managed to stay awake for the entire walk to the car, and as they drove, her mind seemed to clear a bit more. They were silent for some time, before Mike decided to speak up.

"You really act like you give a shit about It," he said quietly. "How is that possible?"

Ana had her elbow on the car door, holding her forehead in her hand as she fought the urge to go to sleep. "I don't."

"Bullshit you don't," he argued, his voice staying the same, even tone. "And what was that shit Asmod was talking about, that you're some sort of - "

"Alien, yeah," she interrupted him. "But I don't remember any of it." Contemplative silence followed.

"I'm never going to stop trying to kill It, you know," Mike said.

"I know." She cleared her throat, adjusting herself in the seat of the car, wincing as her shoulder throbbed. "But I think you're going to have to try again in 27 years. There's not a doubt in my mind that he

won't want to kill you after all this."

"You sure you're just not saying that to protect It? Let It go safely back to sleep so I can forget?"

"No."

Mike shook his head in disbelief. "Man, It really has you under It's thumb. If you could take a step back, see this from the outside - "

"Yeah, and Asmod had you under his thumb too, remember?" she countered. "You have no idea what I've been through."

The rest of the car ride was filled mostly with silence. Mike got her safely into the emergency room, staying a bit longer to make sure she was admitted into a room.

"Thanks, Mike," Ana said, this time being sincere, as he turned to leave.

"If you ever change your mind, give me a call," he said. "I can help you leave." Ana stayed silent at his offer. It was a weird feeling, regarding someone as a friend but also knowing that at some point in the future, they might have to be enemies. After he left her, she started to have conflicting feelings. After all that time spent with Pennywise, she had believed she was completely alone, with the shape shifter being her only confidant. Now, she knew there was a possibility that there was someone else out there willing to have her back, maybe give her a way out. The thought was fleeting, however, and she went back to wondering when Pennywise would get back to her.

She stayed in the hospital overnight, telling the staff she had gotten attacked by a bear. They cleaned and dressed her wound, gave her some antibiotics and a bag of blood. In the afternoon, she finally had a visitor. Robert walked in, flowers in hand, a devilish grin on his face when she spotted him.

"Hi," she said, taking the flowers with a small giggle.

"Hi!" he said cheerily. "I'm glad you're not dead!"

She snorted at his statement. "I'm glad you're not dead, too."

"You ready to blow this popsicle stand?" he said. Ana sat through the most awkward discharge experience ever, with Robert all over her as the nurse tried to educate them on bandage changes and medications. At one point, he even licked her neck while Ana was asking a question. She was grateful to get out of there without them trying to admit him to a psych unit. They took a taxi back to Neibolt house, and as soon as they crossed the threshold, Robert had turned into Pennywise.

"Is he dead?" she asked, wondering how in the world two entities made out of lights were able to fight. She sat down at the kitchen table wearily.

"Extremely dead!"

"Good." She eyed him apprehensively as he got down on his knees in front of her, shoving his face in her cleavage and taking a giant whiff. "And you're not going to eat me now that I smell...even more?"

He stopped rubbing his face between her boobs, his expression suddenly serious as he eyed the dressed wound. He reached up, touching it gingerly with a gloved hand. "No."

"You're sure?"

He locked eyes with her then, his hand suddenly gripping her wrist. "I never should have taken a bite out of you. It was a mistake."

Ana cracked a half smile, unable to keep her face straight as she looked at the clown. "Wait...is that you're way of apologizing?"

Pennywise's expression suddenly went from solemn to confused, and he didn't say anything right away. Then, he swiftly scooped her up into his arms, careful not to bump her injury, and headed towards the stairs. "I'll show you how I apologize!" They both giggled all the way to the bedroom.

Weeks later, on a random morning that Ana didn't know the date of, Pennywise announced that it was time to return to his long sleep. She had been mentally preparing for this, but the mention of it still made

her extremely nervous. When he sensed it on her, he quickly reminded her that she had doubted his confidence about dealing with Asmod and everything there had turned out fine, so she should trust him now. A brief argument had taken place when she pointed out that he nearly ate her, but was resolved with their usual bedroom activities. After, he explained that he would take her down the well again, this time much further down than the part of the sewers she had previously seen.

"Why can't we stay in the house?" she asked, not like the idea of spending decades down there.

"It's much safer down there."

She nodded, knowing he was right. "Everything's going to be different when we wake up, isn't it?"

"Some things will be different. Some things never change," he mused, and she smiled at his little philosophical remark.

She spent the afternoon outside Cassandra's house, getting to catch a glimpse of Ronnie and Heather as children one last time. She prayed that they would be safe and happy, and wondered what they would be like as adults. Pennywise came to fetch her after a couple of hours, seeming surprisingly understanding at her sentimental emotions.

"I've been thinking," she said later when they were back at the house, walking down the basement steps for the final time. "Asmod mentioned my real father, it's just got me wondering about everything."

"Oh?" Pennywise said, his expression hard to read as he looked at her.

"Asmod was able to pull power from my dimension. I know that you entities have different abilities...is there anyway you could help connect me to my home world?" He looked troubled all of a sudden, and she suddenly regretted bringing something like this up right before they were going to start their long rest. "I mean, not to go back there of course, I know you can't, but maybe to communicate, or get my memories back - "

"Pennywise has never explored that ability," he said bluntly.

"So you don't know," she clarified, trying to make it sound like her bubble hadn't just been burst.

"No," he said. He picked her up in his arms, like he had done so many times before. They started to float gracefully down the well. "But I've got 27 years to think about it."

She smiled at him, his response making her completely forget where they were heading. Once they reached the cavern where he usually took his rest, he set her down.

"So, this is it?" she said, looking around the massive area, the large rock formation in the center reminding her of menacing claws. "Looks nice."

He helped her climb up into the center of the formation. She felt her stomach turning over and over, her anxiety making her shake.

"Don't worry, little Ana. Pennywise will protect you," he said, wrapping his long arms around her. His mouth began to open, and Ana couldn't help but look down the widening gap, the deadlights catching her eyes and sending her into a peaceful, cozy slumber.

Author's Note...*Well, that's the end! Thanks so much for reading, following, reviewing, and the like. I had SO much fun writing this that I am considering writing a sequel. However, it depends on my being able to come up with a plot that I'm satisfied with, so time will tell. Thank you again!*

Update as of 10/17/19: *I have started a sequel titled 'Arrival' with 4 chapters posted so far. I'm hoping to add new chapters once or twice a week!*